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POETS,  
POEMS,  
AND  
RHYMES  
OF  
EAST CHESHIRE.

BY T. MIDDLETON.

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Poets,  
Poems,  
AND  
Rhymes  
OF  
EAST CHESHIRE,

Being a history of the Poetry  
and Song Lore, and a Book of  
Biographies of the Poets and  
Song Writers of the Eastern  
Portion of the County Palatine  
of Chester.

---

By THOMAS MIDDLETON,

Author of  
"Annals of Hyde," "Old Godley,"  
"Legends of Longdendale," etc, etc.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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Oh! the Songs of the People are voices of power,  
That echo in many a land;  
They lighten the heart in the sorrowful hour,  
And quicken the labour of hand;  
They gladden the shepherd on mountain and plain,  
And the mariner tossed on the sea,  
The poets have given us many a strain,  
But the songs of the people for me.

“Prince.”

A perusal of the files of old local newspapers has brought to the notice of the present writer a number of poems, songs, and rhymes written by dead and gone worthies of the north-eastern corner of Cheshire; and a further research among the store of unused and almost forgotten books, buried away in our great public libraries, has revealed the fact that the towns and villages of that portion of the country have produced a wealth of homely poetry that is at once creditable and surprising.

The pleasure attending these discoveries has been somewhat marred by the sad reflection that the vast majority of those whose names were attached to the verses, have been long ago forgotten, while even the poems themselves are totally unknown to the reading public of to-day. To me it seemed a pity that all these men and women, who had lifted themselves above the common, sordid things of life, to dream, and write, and sing, and so brighten the years in which they lived, should pass into the grave, and, as a reward for all their labours, meet with oblivion. They surely deserved some monument to commemorate their work and their worth, even if that commemoration were merely to consist of a brief notice in some review of the local literature of their neighbourhood. And so I determined to write some sort of history of the

poets, poems, and songs of that corner of Cheshire in which I dwell; and the following series of biographical sketches is the result of that determination.

A FEW WORDS REGARDING THE TITLE, and the area covered by the sketches, are necessary. The country dealt with is that part of the county of Chester which was formerly included in the old parliamentary division of East Cheshire, and which is covered by the circulation of the "North Cheshire Herald." Most of the effusions of the nineteenth century local bards first appeared in the columns of the "Herald," and it is to the files of that newspaper that the historian must turn for the groundwork of any history of the local poetry in East Cheshire. In one or two cases sketches are given of writers who dwelt just over the borders of Cheshire, either in the county of Lancaster, or in that of Derby. There are special reasons why these men should be noticed in a work of this class. The town of Stalybridge, for instance, is partly in Cheshire, and partly in Lancashire; and it would seem somewhat absurd to deal with one-half of the Stalybridge bards, and leave the other half severely alone. Again, Hyde, and Denton and Haughton, although in two counties, are merely divided from each other by the breadth of a narrow stream, and for centuries these townships have held local literary traditions in common. Finally, some of the songs or poems dealing with East Cheshire subjects and places, and traditions, were written by dwellers in other shires, but the reason for the inclusion of these writers in this series will at once be obvious.

#### STRICT IMPARTIALITY

has been observed in the treatment of the subjects, and the writers are dealt with here in chronological order.

It will perhaps be protested that the work of some of the local bards is not poetry at all, but very bad rhyme. To this I have to answer that my object has been to write a history of local poetry and poets; and I have felt it necessary to include the worst with the best, if only as

CURIOSITIES AND MEMENTOES OF  
WHAT HAS BEEN.

The task of collecting the material has been difficult, entailing much hard work and patient research, but it has been a task of pleasure. It has led me into many strange places, and has introduced me to many quaint and homely characters. It has been rendered lighter by the ready response to requests for information from friends whose kindness I desire to acknowledge.

I am especially indebted to the following gentlemen for encouragement and assistance: Mr. J. W. Sidebotham, J.P., C.C.; the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A (author of Historical Account of Dukinfield Chapel); Mr C. W. Sutto: (City Librarian, Manchester); Mr. Joel Wainwright, J.P. (author of "Memories of Marple"); Mr. Samuel Hill (author of "Foreswood," "Little Spadger's Dog," etc.); Mr. Robert Hamnett, of Glossop; Mr. John Chorlton (Librarian, Hyde); Mr. James Leigh (author of "Gleams of Sunshine"); Mr. John Wagstaffe, Mottram House, Mottram; Mr. Isaac Bardsley, of Oxford, formerly of Ashton; Mr. Samuel Ashton, Godley; Mr. Thomas Kenworthy, Godley Hill; and the ladies and gentlemen, and the relatives of many of those now dead, who are dealt with in this series of sketches.





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# POETS, POEMS, and RHYMES Of EAST CHESHIRE.

By THOMAS MIDDLETON.

(Author of 'Annals of Hyde,' "Old Godley,"  
etc., etc.)

## I.

### AN OLD CHESHIRE BALLAD.

The following ballad of the Spanish Lady's Lover, written by Thomas Deloney, is said to refer to Sir Uryan or Urian Legh, of Adlington—one of the old Cheshire heroes of romance. He won fame as a warrior, and was engaged as a commander under the Earl of Essex, at the siege of Cadiz, when that city was taken by the English in 1590. He was knighted for his services, and was afterwards High Sheriff of Cheshire. At one time he held lands in Hyde, and it is said in some histories that he had a manor house known as the Lumn, at Hyde. The present old house, known as The Lumn, in Hyde, stands upon land purchased from Sir Uryan Legh by an ancestor of the Shepleys,—the family now owning it. Sir Uryan is said to have been a handsome man, and a great favourite with the ladies. According to the tradition it fell to his lot to hold captive, as a prisoner of war, at the siege of Cadiz, a Spanish lady; and so courteously did he treat her during her captivity, that she fell madly in love with him. A part of the ballad is here reproduced.

Will you hear a Spanish ladye,  
How she wooed an Englishman?  
Garments gay and rich as may be,  
Deck'd with jewels, she had on.  
Of a comely countenance and grace was she,  
And by birth and parentage of high degree.

As his prisoner there he kept her,  
 In his hands she there did lye;  
 Cupid's hands did tie them faster  
 By the liking of an eye.

In his courteous company was all her joy,  
 To favour him in anything she was not coy.

But at last there came commandment  
 For to set the ladies free,  
 With their jewels still adorned,  
 None to do them injury.

Then said this lady mild, "Full wo is me;  
 O, let me still sustain this kind captivity!

"Gallant captain, show some pity  
 To a ladye in distresse;  
 Leave me not within this city,  
 For to die in heaviness."

Thou hast this present day my body free,  
 But my heart in prison still remains with  
 thee."

"Rest you still, most gallant lady;  
 Rest you still and weep no more;  
 Of fair lovers there is plenty,  
 Spain doth yield a wondrous store."

Spaniards fraught with jealousy we often find,  
 But Englishmen through all the world are  
 counted kind.

"Leave me not unto a Spaniard,  
 You alone enjoy my heart;  
 I am lovely, young, and tender,  
 Love is likewise my desert:  
 Still to serve thee day and night my mind is  
 prest,  
 The wife of every Englishman is counted  
 blest."

"It would be a shame, fair lady,  
 For to bear a woman hence;  
 English soldiers never carry  
 Any such without offence  
 I'll quickly change myself, if it be so,  
 And like a page, I'll follow thee where'er thou  
 go."

"Courteous lady leave this fancy,  
 Here comes all that breeds the strife;  
 I in England have already  
 A sweet woman to my wife:  
 I will not falsify my vow for gold nor gain,  
 Not yet for all the fairest dames that live in  
 Spain."

“Ah! how happy is that woman  
 That enjoys so true a friend:  
 Many happy days God send her;  
 Of my suit I make an end:  
 On my knees I pardon crave for my offence,  
 Which did from love and true affection first  
 commence.

“Commend me to thy lovely lady,  
 Bear to her this chain of gold;  
 And these bracelets for a token,  
 Grieving that I was so bold  
 All my jewels in like sort take thou with thee,  
 For they are fitting for thy wife, but not for  
 me!

“I will spend my days in prayer,  
 Love and all its joys defy:  
 In a nunnery will I shroud me,  
 Far from any companye:  
 But ere my prayers have an end, be sure of  
 this,  
 To pray for thee and for thy love I will not  
 miss.

“Thus farewell, most gallant captain!  
 Farewell to my heart’s content!  
 Count not Spanish ladies wanton,  
 Though to thee my love was bent.  
 Joy and true prosperity go still with thee!”  
 “The like fall ever to thy share, most fair  
 ladie!”

---

## II.

WILLIAM NICOLS, RECTOR OF STOCK-  
 PORT (1694).

William Nicols, M.A., appointed Rector of Stockport in 1694, was the son of a gentleman of Glamorganshire. Before his presentation to the living of Stockport he had held the living of Cheadle, Cheshire. He was an accomplished scholar and was the author of two books in Latin elegiac verse. In one of these “*De Literis Inventis*,” he refers to certain passages in his own career, and mentions that he was a pupil of the celebrated Dr. Fell. In one passage he says—

One loves dogs, another horses, but my  
 sole pleasure will always be my books,  
 which enable me to know very many  
 things.”

In another he describes the rough treatment he met with at the hands of the opponents of the King; he himself was a staunch adherent of the reigning monarch—

“The villainous mob, having frequently threatened me with death, at length set fire to my house. This is the reason: I rejoiced in the safety of my King and country, and was unwilling that Britons should bear the Gaelic yoke. I was accustomed to rebuke those wretched beings who . . . often dared to show their joy, if any reverse befel their native land.”

In one of his Latin verses he thus waxes eloquent upon the beauties of Stockport—

Where the high bank of Mersey's stream appears,  
A pleasant hill its summit gently rears;  
Built by myself, on this my mansion stands,  
And of the town a distant view commands;  
More varied beauties this sweet view contains  
Than all the charms of far-famed Tempe's plains;

Stopport the place was called in days of yore,  
And of a Baron's seat the title bore,  
As long as Chester by its Earls was swayed,  
And in this land its regal power displayed,  
But time has changed them both, and now  
they claim

The shadow only of a mighty name!  
Stopport can boast its Church, its bridge, and  
spring.  
Where waters health to lingering patients  
bring;  
Neat is the town, and in a pleasant site,—  
In all things rich for use and for delight.

His other work, also in Latin verse, consists of seven books on the principles of the Christian Religion, in the form of a dialogue between a master and his pupil.

No record can be found of the burial of this gifted local rector.

## III.

A FAMOUS CHESHIRE HUNTING SONG  
AND ITS AUTHOR

(CHARLES LEGH, OF ADLINGTON).

The author of the following old song "as the representative of one of the oldest and most famous landed families in Cheshire—the Leghs of Adlington. He was born in 1697, was Colonel of the Cheshire Militia, and High Sheriff in 1747. He was a great friend of Handel, the composer, and appears to have been a lover of good music. There is a good account of him written by the late Mr. Croston, author of "Nooks and Corners of Lancashire, Cheshire, etc." Our subject died on July 26th, 1781, and was buried at Prestbury, on August 3rd following. The song was published in Thomas Hale's "Social Harrmony" (1763), and is as follows:—

The morning is charming, all Nature is gay,  
Away my Brave boys to your Horses away,  
For the Prime of our Pleasure and questing  
the Hare,

We have not so much as a Moment to spare.

Chorus of the Hunters:

Hark the merry loud Horn how melodious  
it sounds  
To the musical Song of the merry-mouth'd  
Hounds.

In yon stubble Field we shall find her below,  
So "Ho" cries the Huntsman, hark to him  
"So, Ho!"  
See, see, where she goes, and the Hounds  
have a view  
Such Harmony Handel himself never knew.  
Gates, Hedges, and Ditches to us are no  
bounds  
But the World is our own while we follow  
the Hounds.

Hold, hold, 'tis a double hark! hey Tanner  
 hey,  
 If a Thousand gainsay it a Thousand shall lie,  
 His beauty surpassing, his truth has been  
 try'd,  
 At the head of a Pack an infallible guide.  
 To his cry the wide welkin with thunder re-  
 sounds  
 The darling of Hunters, the glory of  
 Hounds.

O'er high lands and low lands and wood lands  
 we fly  
 Our Horses full speed and the Hounds in full  
 cry;  
 So match are their mouths and so even they  
 run  
 As the tune of the Spheres and their race with  
 the sun,  
 Health, joy, and felicity dance in the rounds,  
 And bless the gay circle of Hunters and  
 Hounds.

The old Hounds push forward a very sure  
 sign,  
 That the Hare, though a stout one, begins to  
 decline:  
 A Chase of two hours or more she has led;  
 She's down, look about ye, they have her,  
 'ware dead.  
 How glorious a death to be honoured with  
 sounds  
 Of the Horn, with a shout to the Chorus of  
 Hounds.

Here's a health to all Hunters, and long be  
 their lives,  
 May they never be crosst by their Sweet-  
 hearts, or Wives;  
 May they rule their own Passions and ever at  
 rest  
 As the most happy Men be they also the best.  
 And free from the care the many surrounds  
 Have peace at the last when they see no  
 more Hounds.



## IV.

## T I M B O B B I N.

John Collier, better known to the world by his peculiar nom-de-plume—"Tim Bobbin,"—was the first of the Lancashire dialect school of writers. He is said by local enthusiasts to have been born at Harrison Fold, Newton—now a portion of the Borough of Hyde,—a statement which, however, is disputed by some, who assert that he was a native of Urmston. The Flixton registers contain the entry of his baptism at Flixton Church on the 6th of January, 1710, but Newtonians claim that he was born in Newton, and that his father removed shortly afterwards to Urmston, thus accounting for the baptism of the infant at Flixton. The Newton theorists certainly have reason on their side, inasmuch as the statement that Collier was a native of Harrison Fold has been handed down to the present generation of Newtonians by their great-grandsires, many of whom knew Tim Bobbin personally. Moreover, it is also noteworthy that Aiken adds the following footnote to the account of Tim Bobbin's life, printed in his well-known "History of Manchester," in the year 1797:—

"Mr. Wardleworth, master of the Free School at Mottram, assures us that he (Tim Bobbin) was born at Harrison Fold, near this village. He was intimately connected with him from his youth."

The father of Tim Bobbin was the Rev. John Collier, a clergyman of the Church of England, who was born at Newton in 1682, held a curacy at Eccles and other places, and died at Newton in the year 1739, being buried at Mottram Church. Bobbin, in an address to the subscribers to his writings, thus describes himself and

## H I S Y O U T H.

"In the reign of Queen Anne he was a boy and one of the nine children of a poor curate in Lancashire, whose stipend never amounted to thirty pounds a year; and consequently the family must feel the iron teeth of penury with a witness . . . so this 'T.B.' lived as some other boys did, content with water pottage, buttermilk and jannock, till he was between 13 and 14 years of age, when Providence began to smile on him in his advancement to a pair of Dutch looms, when he met with treacle to his pottage, and sometimes a little in his buttermilk, or spread on his jannock. However, the reflections of his father's circumstances (which now and then start up, and still edge his teeth) make him believe that Pluralists are no good Christians."

In order to augment the small income from his curacy, the elder Collier acted as schoolmaster at various places, and with the joint proceeds of his labours managed to feed and clothe his family, and to give them a fair education, until he had the misfortune to become totally blind, when in his 40th year. His intention had been to bring up his son John to the Church, but the dreadful calamity which had now fallen upon him put an end to such ambitions, and young Collier was

APPRENTICED TO A DUTCH LOOM  
WEAVER

named Johnson, who lived at Harrison Fold, Newton. Here he worked for some time, but the labour was far from congenial, and he eventually persuaded his master to release him from servitude, upon which he commenced as itinerant schoolmaster, going about the country from one small town to another, teaching the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and generally holding a night school, as well as one by day. His own account of this period states—"Went 'prentice

in May, 1722, to one Johnson, a Dutch loom weaver, at Newton Moor, but hating slavery in all shapes, by Divine Providence, vailing my scull-cap to the mitres, in November, 1727, commenced as

SCHOOLMASTER AT MILNROW."

Previous to his appointment at Milnrow, he had taught at Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, and other towns and villages in the neighbourhood, and it was while teaching at Oldham that he heard that the curate and schoolmaster of Milnrow—the Rev. — Pearson, was in want of an assistant. The rev. gentleman's total salary was but a modest twenty pounds a year, and he gave half of this to Tim Bobbin. The ten pounds a year of regular wage Tim looked upon as a "God-send," especially as he could still continue his night-schools at the different villages round about. On the death of Mr. Pearson, some years afterwards, Collier was appointed master.

By dint of careful study and constant practice "Tim" now became proficient in drawing and painting, and was also a clever performer upon the haut-boy and the flute. He also began to scribble in prose and verse, and about 1739 published his first piece — "The Blackbird," a rhymed satire on a barrister in the neighbourhood. On April 1st, 1744, he married, at the age of 35, Mary Clay, who was then only 21 years of age. When a large family began to appear upon the scene, he set to work seriously with his paint and brush, turning out pictures with amazing rapidity. He painted altar-pieces for chapels, and signs for inns. But his chief productions were portraits in caricature, which he carried to the inns at Rochdale and Littleborough, where they were disposed of by the landlords to travellers. Tim now became famous, not only in

his own neighbourhood, but throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire. His fame brought from a Halifax gentleman the offer of a good berth as clerk in an office, and Tim accepted it, but after a short absence he returned to his school at Milnrow, from which place he felt he could not part.

In 1746 he published his well-known

“TUMMAS AND MEARY”

—a dialogue between two Lancashire characters,—which met with harsh treatment at the hands of the critic of the “Gentleman’s Magazine.” To the cockney critic the rude dialect used by “Tim Bobbin” no doubt seemed as puzzling as some foreign tongue, and even Lancashire-born people of the present day would find it difficult to make out the meaning of all his words. There is, however, no doubt as to the popularity of Tim Bobbin’s writings among the Lancashire people of his time.

The work of Tim Bobbin was full of the whimsical eccentricities which characterised the writer. Some of the epitaphs on the grave-stones at Rochdale were written by him. Among others he wrote the following one on Joe Green, who was sexton in Tim’s day:—

“Here lies Joe Green, who arch has been  
And drove a gainful trade  
With powerful Death, till out of breath,  
He threw away his spade.  
When Death beheld his comrade yield,  
He, like a cunning knave,  
Came soft as wind, poor Joe behind,  
And pushed him into his grave.”

The above lines are published with Tim Bobbin’s works, and the following

EPITAPH ON THE TOMBSTONE OF A  
BLACKSMITH,

although not included in his published writings, is usually attributed to him:—

“My anvil and my hammer lie declined;  
My bellows, too, have lost their wind;  
My fire’s extinct, my forge decayed,  
And in the dust my vice is laid;  
My coal is spent, my iron is gone,  
My last nail driven, and my work done.

Tim Bobbin’s prose works must be read in their entirety to be properly appreciated. Of his rhymes a few additional extracts may be given. In the course of a preface to the third edition of his works occur the following characteristic lines:—

“Some write to show their wit and parts;  
Some show you Whig, some Tory hearts;  
Some flatter knaves, some fops, some fools,  
And some are ministerial tools.

Some few in virtue’s cause do write,  
But these, alas, get little by’t.

Some turn out maggots from their head,  
Which die before their author’s dead.

Some write such sense in prose and rhyme,  
Their works will wrestle hard with Time.

Some few print truth—but many LIES,—  
On SPIRITS down to BUTTERFLIES.

Some write to PLEASE, some do’t for SPITE,  
But want of money makes me write.

The following lines form the opening of his poem entitled

“THE BLACKBIRD.”

When bright Apollo’s flaming car had run  
The Southern course, and in our climes begun  
To perfect blossoms, and the budding  
flowers;—  
To paint the fields, and form the shady  
bowers,

The distant prospects all around were seen  
 To wear a curious eye-delighting green;  
 And school-boys stood, while sloth put on the  
 reins,  
 And with crammed satchels sauntered in the  
 lanes.

The younger sort would stroll about to get  
 The daisy, primrose, and the violet;  
 While Tom and Will, with eager eyes, would  
 view  
 Each bush and tree, from whence a linnet  
 flew,  
 And every hedge did pry into, to find  
 The downy structure of the feathered kind.

Perhaps one of the most typical of Tim Bobbin's pieces was the one which is here reproduced in its entirety:

“CUCKOO AND THE OWL,”

A Fable.

A cuckoo many years had ranged  
 Amongst the feathered kind,  
 To see if he a mate could meet,  
 Would fix his roving mind.  
 He tried all; he loves but few,  
 For some too high did soar;  
 Some were too little, some too big,  
 And some too ragg'd and poor.

At last he would a-courting go  
 To broad-faced Mistress Owl,  
 Believing her the prettiest bird  
 Of all the winged fowl.  
 Transported with this odd conceit,  
 Away the cuckoo flew,  
 And in a very am'rous strain  
 He thus begins to woo:

“Dear Madam Owl, my heart has been  
 Long captive to your charms,  
 Nor can it have a moment's rest  
 Till your soft down it warms.”  
 This said, the cuckoo would have bill'd;  
 The owl, she turned her face,  
 As knowing coyness whets an edge  
 And gives a better grace.

Sir Cuckoo would not be denied,  
 But struggled for a kiss  
 Which having gained, the cuckoo cried:  
 “What melting joy is this!”  
 Thus thirteen moons the cuckoo woo'd  
 Her ladyship the owl,  
 Who thought her sweetheart loved her  
 nore  
 Than miller loves his toll:

Because he talked of Hymen's noose,  
And needs would have her go  
To have it tied about their necks,  
By help of Parson Crow.

But, as it chanced, the owl was deep  
With reverend crow in love,  
And hoping still to make him her's,  
The thing did not approve.

But lest she should not gain the crow,  
She would not flat deny  
The roving cuckoo's queer request,  
Lest she alone should lie.  
The cuckoo smelt the cunning jilt,  
Too wise to be a fool,  
And carries on the farce awhile,  
To countermine the owl.

For long he loved, and was esteemed  
By the solitary jay,  
To whom he, flying, weds, and leaves  
The owl to time a prey;  
For she, not pleasing Parson Crow,  
Wished she'd the cuckoo then:  
But 'twas too late, the time had gone,  
And would not come again.

Her ruddy face, so gay before,  
Is turned a tarnish white;  
Her sprightly mind and brilliant thoughts  
Are like the cloudy night.  
So now she haunts the lonely woods,  
And hoots in barns by night,  
Complaining of her fine-spun wit,  
And hates to see the light.

#### The Moral.

The virgin thus in all the bloom of life  
Is loved and courted for a happy wife;  
But she denies—expecting nobler game  
Till forty comes, and she's no 'no'e the  
same,  
For time is gone: then wishes vainly rise;  
She curses av'rice, and a maid she dies.

Tim Bobbin died on the 14th of July, 1786,  
and was buried in Rochdale Churchyard. It  
is said that only twenty minutes before his  
death he wrote the following lines for his own  
epitaph:—

A yard beneath this stone  
Lies Jack-of-all-Trades, good at none;  
A weaver first, and then schoolmaster,—  
A scriv'ner next, then poetaster;—  
A painter, graver, and a fluter;  
And fame doth whisper, a C——r;  
An author, carver, and hedge-clerk;  
E whoo—whoo—whoo, what wofu' wark!  
He's laft um aw to lie i' th' dark,

Tim's wife had predeceased him, but he left behind a family of three sons and two daughters.

Tim Bobbin's grave is one of the "sights" of Rochdale. Bamford wrote a poem commencing—

"I stood beside Tim Bobbin's grave,  
At looks o'er Rochda' town."

And since Bamford's day many thousands have toiled up the steep hillside to the spot in Rochdale Churchyard, where John Collier lies buried. A visitor to the place will soon find a guide, for the urchins of the neighbourhood are always on the look-out, ready to proffer their services. They take it for granted that every visitor to Rochdale desires to make a pilgrimage to Tim Bobbin's grave. A short time ago I approached Rochdale Churchyard, and immediately half-a-dozen ragged lads and lasses rushed up, each endeavouring to shout louder than the others: "Hi, mestur. Show yo' Tim Bobbin's grave. Aw con say it best." I nodded, and without more ado they led the way at a run; the first lad there thrust the others aside, fell on his knees on the grave-stone, and with his cap vigorously brushed aside the dust; then pointing to the inscription, commenced to chant at lightning speed—

"Here lies John, and with him Mary,—  
Cheek by jowl, and never vary;  
No wonder they so well agree,  
John wants no punch, and Moll no tea.

Then he thrust out his hand, pocketed the coppers, and ran off to find another patron. The above lines are erroneously ascribed to Tim Bobbin, but it is said they were first cut upon his gravestone in the year 1818.



## V.

## ROBERT WALKER.

## "TIM BOBBIN THE SECOND."

The literary style adopted by Tim Bobbin was held in high esteem by the Lancashire working-classes of the eighteenth century, and that author had many local disciples. Perhaps the cleverest, certainly the best known of these, was the subject of this sketch—Robert Walker, a native of Audenshaw, whose literary efforts have been given to the world under the nom-de-plume of "Tim Bobbin the Second."

Robert Walker was born in the year 1728, at Carrington Barn, a farmhouse near Red Hall, Audenshaw. He is described by a contemporary as a well-proportioned man of five feet seven and a half inches in height, who kept a small farm and also added to his profits by handloom weaving. He seems to have been a man of considerable intellectual powers, and of an education superior to that of his neighbours, and for the greater portion of his life was evidently looked upon as a leader by those of the working classes with whom he associated. He became noted for his strong political opinions, and was a prominent speaker at gatherings of handloom weavers which were held from time to time in the neighbourhood in order to discuss the conditions of the weaving trade. His opinions upon political and industrial questions found vent in his writings. His best known literary work was published under the title "Plebian Politics, or principles and practices of certain Mole-eyed Manicus, vulgarly called Warrites. By way of a dialogue between two Lancashire clowns. Together with several fugitive pieces by Tim Bobbin the Second.

Dedicated to the Tenants of the Sty in general, and to the Swine of Lancashire in particular, December 24th, 1801." Walker died at the age of 75 years, and was interred in Ashton-under-Lyne parish churchyard in May, 1803. He had a family of thirteen children, several of whom survived him.

Much of Robert Walker's work was in prose. The greater portion of his poetry consisted of political satires and opinions expressed in verse. Two examples of his style are appended, and they cast an interesting side-light on bygone history. As a preface to the first extract it should be stated that on the 13th of December, 1776, Lord North ordered a public fast. On this order Walker thus comments:

Behold a solemn fast proclaimed, by G——e,  
old England's King.  
When all his nobles and their tribe, must  
their sin-offerings bring.  
Such as the mitred priests should think proper  
expiation  
For all the blood that must be spilt while  
forcing their taxation,  
To supplicate the Lord of Heaven, to bless  
their cruel rage,  
And grant them vengeance on their friends,  
while war with them they wage.  
With hands polluted, fresh with blood, and  
thoughts on mischief bent,  
How dare those writers meet their God, who  
knows their vile intent,  
The dark recesses of their souls are open to  
his sight.  
And when His wrath is fully ripe, on their  
own heads will light.  
When I before the Lord shall come to offer  
up my prayer  
May it not be with men of blood, lest God for-  
bear to hear,  
This is the fast the Lord hath chose, and with  
his words agree  
To loose the bonds of violence and set the  
oppressed free.

The second example of Walker's work is in the dialect. Like the foregoing extract, it

alludes to men and events now almost forgotten :

Iv o theese kn—ves mun go to th' prokters  
 An tell ther' krimes to theese soul dokters,  
 They'n bring 'em o to trew repentance  
 When'ere they kom fur't pass ther sentence.

For these blind guides will not be jokit,  
 Bol' mak 'em o t' repent i'th pokkit  
 An' tell 'em o they sure are sinners,  
 An' hardly leove 'um out for dinners.

So iv theese Ch—ch and Roy—al foos  
 Mun put theirsels i'th public nuse,  
 Thers mony a bo' througheawt this nation  
 Would bite his nails fro' sheer vexashion,

An kurs boath Hawke un mestur Otto,  
 Sayin' tu 'um boath, the devil fott o,  
 For making peeoss wi' Bonnipeter,  
 So neaw I'll eend me klumsy meter.

## VI.

### LORD ALVANLEY.

Richard Pepper Arden, first Lord Alvanley, was the son of John Arden, of Arden Hall, near Stockport, and was born in 1744. His early education was obtained at the Manchester Grammar School; afterwards he went to Cambridge, where he became B.A. in 1766, and M.A. in 1769. Having adopted the law as a profession he soon became King's Counsel; and entering parliament as member for Newton, in the Isle of Wight, was made Solicitor-General in 1783. A year later he became Attorney-General and Chief Justice of Cheshire, and in 1788 was made Master of the Rolls, and was soon afterwards knighted. He succeeded Lord Eldon as Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, being called to the House of Lords as Baron Alvanley, and was also appointed a Privy Councillor. His rapid rise in politics is said to have been the result of his close friendship with the great William Pitt.

Lord Alvanley won some little fame as a poet. His verse is not of the type which is born to be immortal, but it is often witty and humorous, and occasionally brilliant. The sample here given is said to have been written for dramatic performance during his school days; and in it the writer deals with the question of English elocution, and the career of the lawyer and politician.

To shun the rock on which so many split,  
Which renders learning dull and tasteless wit,  
We thus presume to tread the buskinéd stage,  
And risk attempts so far beyond our age;  
The motive sure is good, excuse it, then,  
If boys who hope in time to act like men,  
Leave for a time their Latin and their Greek,  
And their own native English learn to speak;  
Learn to speak well, what well they hope to  
write,  
And manly eloquence with truth unite.

Each act his part in his respective place,  
With just decorum and becoming grace,  
Teach with success fair virtue's sacred law,  
Speak at the bar with honour and applause,  
And in the senate plead our country's cause.

Generally speaking, the few productions of his pen shows much refinement and ease of expression, as well as the keenness and brilliant pointing of the satirist. Arden's fame as a versifier must, however, rank far below the reputation he has acquired for his legal learning and the soundness of his judgments.

Lord Alvanley died in 1804, and was buried in the Roll's Chapel, Chancery Lane. His two sons left no issue, and on the death of the younger in 1851, the title became extinct.



## VII.

THE REV. THOMAS SMITH, MINISTER  
AT DUKINFIELD CHAPEL (1795-1797)

was a Cheshire man. This writer was at one time a Methodist preacher. He preached at Dukinfield on the first three Sundays in December, 1794, and was, early in the following year, elected minister at Dukinfield Chapel, which he left in June, 1797, for a ministerial post at Stand, and in 1810 removed to Risley. For about ten years after that he was minister at Park Lane, but eventually retired from the ministry in 1822, and died near Chester on January 18th, 1836. Whilst at Dukinfield, he founded a literary society, which was the means of turning out several local poets. Smith published two volumes of Poems,—“Original Miscellaneous Poems,” 1790, and “Poems,” 1797. He also published a Prose Essay on “Avarice.” There are copies of his publications in the Manchester Reference Library. The earliest bears the title “Rev. Thomas Smith’s Original Miscellaneous Poems, Stockport: Printed by J. Clarke, For the Author. MDCCCLXXX.” This little book of 184 pages begins with a piece entitled

## “THE BACHELOR’S CHOICE,”

in which the author thus pictures the ‘air maid likely to satisfy a bachelor.

“Each feature must symmetry’s beauty display,  
And her breath must be sweeter than zephyrs  
in May;  
Her eyebrows with Titian’s famed pencil  
must vie,  
While suspended is fate in the glance of her  
eye;  
Her cheeks with mixed lillies and roses must  
glow,  
And her neck (to be sure) must be whiter than  
snow,  
Her bosom must heave, to lead captive at  
will,

And her lips must ambrosia and nectar distil:  
 Then her voice must be music, soft warbling and clear,  
 Such as syrens themselves would enrapture to hear.

The next poem is entitled

“THE FEMALE CHOICE,”

and is a burlesque answer to the first piece. The author makes his female say:

“But if youth could attract me (and who can restrain  
 The soft workings of nature which thrill in each vein),  
 May his head with the grace of a Frenchman’s be hung,  
 As if just from a milliner’s band-box he sprung,  
 Yet obsequious as pug may the animal prove,  
 For the doctrine of sweet non-resistance I love.

Among the remaining contents of the book are—“The Bachelor’s Consolation,” “Eccentricity,” “Fashion, a Satire,” “Elegy on the Rev. J. Fletcher”; several epitaphs, “Patience, an ode,” “A Panegyrical Critique, or Dr. Young’s Night-Thoughts,” “Virtue,” and “The Supreme Good, a Vision.” The two last-named poems are the most ambitious of the series. In that on “Virtue,” the author breaks into a description of a spot “Where the cool zephyrs o’er the landscape stray,  
 And fan the bosom of the glowing day;  
 Where the long vista’s terminating bound,  
 Fills the fond eye with splendid scenes around;  
 Blue hills, whose lengthened distance shrouds their height,  
 Melt into mist, and swim before the sight;  
 Tremendous rocks, co-eval with old time,  
 Lift their large fronts, and seem to frown sublime;  
 Expanded lakes, whose lucid mirrors show The sun’s bright image, or the radiant bow;  
 Enamelled vales, white flocks, luxuriant fields  
 And the wild scenery, genial Nature yields.

The volume entitled "Poems," by Thomas Smith, was published in 1797 by Cowdroy and Boden, St. Mary's Gate, Manchester. It is a small volume of 99 pages. The copy in the Manchester Reference Library has an announcement on the fly-leaf that the author was minister of Dukinfield Chapel in the year 1797.

The Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., in his history of Dukinfield Chapel, says of this writer—"Smith's masterpiece is the line—

"The strained eye, pacing o'er the dewy lawn."

"Bardsley's (another local poet) comment upon this gem runs as follows—

"See Tommy Smith enormously offend,  
And rise to faults which critics cannot mend."

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## VIII.

### A HAUGHTON RHYMESTER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

#### I S A A C B A R D S L E Y.

Little is known concerning this local rhymester, and I have been able to secure only one short specimen of his work. But the story concerning it is well worth telling.

In the year 1774, the dead body of one James Hill, landlord of the Red Lion Inn, Droylsden, was found in Newton Wood, on the banks of the River Tame, near Hyde; and a Coroner's jury decided that Hill had committed suicide by strangling himself. In accordance with the custom of those days the authorities decided that his body should be buried at the cross roads at Newton Moor, and this was done without the customary

rites of Christian burial, on the 21st of May, 1774. But there was a wide belief that Hill had been murdered by two confederates, who were afraid of him turning informer against them concerning a crime in which Hill had a part. Accordingly, Hill's friends were determined that the body should be buried in a churchyard, and they dug it up by night on the 5th of June, and carried it to Ashton Church, where they buried it in the graveyard. A woman who met them spread the information, and the authorities began to make trouble. Hill's friends were stubborn in the matter, and the body was again dug up and conveyed by them from place to place until they were at length forced to give in, and obey the law, whereupon the final interment took place at the cross roads, Newton Green, on the 16th of June, 1774. The body had on the first occasion been interred at the four-lane ends, where the junction of Bennett-street and Muslin-street is crossed by Ashton-road on Newton Moor; its final resting-place was near the Commercial Inn, Newton Green. It is worthy of note that some years afterwards two of Hill's confederates were executed at Chester for burglaries committed in this neighbourhood, and when on the scaffold one of them confessed that he and others had murdered Hill in the wood just below Newton Hall, where the footpath goes from the canal bank to the walk which leads by the River Tame to Broomstair Bridge.

A number of Droylsden people joined to defray the expense of a gravestone for Hill's grave at Newton Green, and a prize was offered for the best lines to serve as an inscription. The prize was won by one Thomas Moss, of Ashton (whose father, John Moss, was a noted bell-ringer of his time), with the following lines, which were afterwards placed upon the stone:

"Unhappy Hill, with anxious care oppressed,  
Rashly presumed to find in death his rest;  
With this vague hope, in lonesome wood did  
he  
Strangle himself as jury did agree;  
For which a Christian burial he's denied,  
And is consigned to lie at this wayside.

Reader,  
Reflect what may be the consequence of a  
crime which excludes the possibility of  
repentance."

It is said that all the "learned men of the neighbourhood" competed for the prize, and among the unsuccessful aspirants was Isaac Bardsley, of Haughton, who appears to have been keenly disappointed by his failure. Evidently jealous of his successful rival he penned the following parody on Moss's lines;

"Unhappy Moss; with itch of verse oppressed,  
Rashly presumed to rhyme himself to rest;  
With this vague hope in "ueful style did he  
Write six bad lines, as Judges do agree,  
Which even a Pagan funeral were denied,  
And to be laughed at laid at this wayside."

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## IX.

### REV. WILLIAM PARR GRESSWELL, OF DENTON CHAPEL.

There is a special reason for including a notice of this Lancashire parson in a history of East Cheshire poetry. The little episcopal chapel at which he ministered was built in order to provide church accommodation for the inhabitants of Denton, Haughton, and Hyde—the last-named township being entirely in Cheshire. And prior to 1832, when Hyde Church was built, the Church-going inhabitants of Hyde were locally reckoned as part of the flock of old Parson Gresswell.

The Rev. William Parr Gresswell was the son of John Gresswell, of Chester. He was baptized at Tarvin, Cheshire, on June 23rd,

1765, and received the first portion of his education at the Grammar School, Chester. Ordained in 1789, he became curate of Blackley, near Manchester, where he remained a short time only, being in September, 1791, presented to the incumbency of Denton, by the first Earl of Wilton, to whose son he was tutor. A young man of only 26 years of age when he took up his residence at Denton, he was destined to hold the curacy for 65 years, and to play such a part in the affairs of the township that toward the end of his career he was not only one of the oldest inhabitants, but was recognised as the most notable man who had figured in the history of Denton during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The task which lay before him when he entered on his

#### MINISTRY AT DENTON

was by no means easy. Authorities agree that the district of Denton and Haughton was one of the rudest and most uncivilised in England at that period. But the influence which he exercised upon his parishioners was great, and ultimately led to the moral, as well as the spiritual improvement of the neighbourhood. One of the notable features of his ministry was the preservation and restoration of the fabric of the ancient chapel at Denton—ample testimony to his zeal in this direction being found in the history of the chapel.

The living of Denton was a very poor one, being worth only £50 per annum when Mr. Gresswell entered into it. Out of this he had to support his position as a clergyman, and educate a large family; and recognising the inadequacy of his stipend for this purpose, and in order also that he might himself superintend the education of his seven sons, he

opened

A SCHOOL IN DENTON,

which was attended by the sons of most of the well-to-do people of the neighbourhood. As a schoolmaster he was most successful, and his sons, all tutored by their father, won some remarkable scholastic triumphs. Five of them went to Oxford, and won high honours, each one becoming a Fellow of his College. Another was a medical man, and the seventh became Master of the Chetham Hospital, Manchester. Most of them were authors, and the worth of their works has been widely recognised. The third son, Richard, was perhaps the most remarkable of the lot, and he is dealt with in Dean Burgon's book, "The Lives of Twelve Good Men." Richard Gresswell became a great benefactor to Denton, and it was chiefly owing to him that Christ Church, Denton, was built.

Owing to the smallness of the stipend at Denton, the Gresswells were compelled to live simply, and to exercise rigid thrift. In their early married days Mrs. Gresswell was often seen doing her house-work with her baby tied in her lap. In

LATER LIFE

Mr. Gresswell's school kept him occupied the greater part of the day, and he was scarcely seen in the village until evening. For all that he knew everybody in the place. For several years preceding his death, he rarely preached, but he invariably took the sacramental service up to his 88th year

In 1853 Mr. Gresswell, owing to old age and infirmity, resigned the living, and out of compliment to him the Bishop attended purposely at Denton to receive the resignation at

his hands. A few months afterwards, the venerable pastor was gathered to his fathers, dying on January 12th, 1854, at the age of 89 years. He was buried at Denton Chapel, and out of respect for his memory, the Bishop of Manchester took the funeral service.

Mr. Gresswell was the author of the following works:—(1) “Memoirs of Angelus Politanus,” etc.; (2) “Annals of Parisian Typography, etc.”; (3) “The Monastery of St. Werburgh, A Poem,” published 1823, 8vo; (4) “A View of the Early Parisian Press.” His poetry is not well-known to the present generation. The following verses, taken from

“THE MONASTRY OF ST WERBURGH,” will give an idea of his style and merit.

Lo! where triumphant o'er the wreck of years  
The time-worn Fabrick lifts its awful form:  
Scath'd with the blast its sculptur'd front  
appears,

Yet frowns defiance on the impetuous storm.  
What Pow'rs—to more than giant bulk ally'd,  
Thy firm-compacted mass conspir'd to raise!  
Then bade thee stand secure to latest days,  
Wonder of after times,—of Cestria's sires the  
pride.

Oft through thy spacious aisles I love to stray,  
Where Heaven's translucent splendours  
stream no more  
Through rainbow-tinted panes;—with bright  
display  
Though blaz'd each crystall'd arch in days of  
yore;  
Or seek thy Choir—the graver's art to trace  
In carvings richly wrought, or sculptur'd  
shrines;  
Or secret Hall of conclave—that combines  
With Symmetry's chaste form each lighter  
gothic grace.

And—as on dangerous enterprise intent,  
Oft from these cheerful scenes my steps I  
bend,  
To explore the time-clos'd crypt's obscure  
descent,  
Or mark where Ruins scarce their fall suspend;  
And less enamour'd of the effulgence bright,  
That gilds the aspiring Temple's vista'd walls,

To tread on fragments where the reptile  
crawls,  
And spy what age conceals—forego the garish  
light

'Midst cheerless days—in this sequester'd cell  
Where never pierc'd the mist-dispelling beam,  
Some Anchoret perchance, his beads would  
tell,

Or musing, contemplate the taper's gleam.  
I mark his pallid form,—his frenzied air;  
Fell discontent sits brooding on his brow:  
He starts! in solitude to curse the vow  
That tore him from his kind—and doomed him  
to despair.

Lost to the dearest charities of life,  
Some mortal wasted here her blooming years;  
Sighed o'er the names of mother and wife,  
And poured in secret unavailing tears;  
Absorbed—a clay, cold form—in silent woe,  
She sits unconscious,—till the vesper bell  
Wafts on her startled ear its solemn knell,  
And makes her perjured lips to ill-dissembled  
show.

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## X.

### WILLIAM HAMPSON, J.P., of DUKIN- FIELD.

The career of this writer presents a striking contrast to the life-story of most of the local poets. For whereas the majority of the bygone working-class bards of East Cheshire continued in conditions of hardship not far removed from poverty, until the end of their lives, William Hampson raised himself to a position of affluence and social distinction. He was born in 1770 in humble circumstances, and was presumably a native of Dukinfield. His early education was of the most meagre description, but this misfortune he afterwards remedied by his own exertions in pursuit of knowledge. From that excellent book—an "Historical Account of Dukinfield Chapel, and its school," by the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A.—we learn that he came under the

influence of the Rev. Thomas Smith (minister of Dukinfield Chapel, 1795 to 1797), who himself published verse: he appears also to have met with some patronage and encouragement in his

#### POETICAL ASPIRATIONS

from Mrs. Hay, the widow of John Astley, lord of the manor, and from other persons of influence in the neighbourhood. Thus encouraged—and, according to one historian, invited by Mrs. Hay and her second husband, the Hon. and Rev. R. Hay, Vicar of Rochdale—he published a small volume, the title page of which is inscribed:—

“Dukinfield Lodge: A Poem in Two Cantos. London. Printed for the Author, and sold by John Stockdale, Piccadilly; and Clarke and Co., Manchester, 1793. Price one shilling.”

The poem is dedicated in the following words:—

“To Mrs. Hay, of Dukinfield Lodge: The following POEM, which attempts to celebrate the place of her Residence, is inscribed by her most humble and most obedient servant, W. Hampson.”

In his preface, the young author tells us something of himself and his book.

“It is the first attempt of an humble individual, known only in a very confined circle, whose education has been pointed to a situation very different from that in which he appears before the public; and whose opportunities of improvement have been very few.”

The poem does not readily lend itself to quotation, but the following extract, which describes the view to be seen from the terrace of Dukinfield Lodge at the end of the eighteenth century, will be of interest:—

Spread to the sight, by Nature's pencil drawn,  
 Appear gay woods, and inlets of the lawn,  
 A varied charm, a cultivated slope,  
 The boon of plenty, all the peasants' hope.  
 A sable gloom the mountain seems to throw,  
 In brows the steep, and shades the glen below;  
 The meads concealed, the harmless cot unseen,  
 Light curves the smoke above th' embosom'd green;  
 Icose gales arise, the shadows up the steep  
 Skim on light wing, and o'er the valleys sweep;  
 Then shines the sky, with silver light o'er-spread,  
 Flams the white rock, and falls the loud cascade;  
 Rills catch the lustre, streams resplendent  
 Run, And print their waves with many a downward fun.

Ten years later Hampson again tempted fate by publishing "A Poetical Epistle to the Rev. John Grundy, occasioned by his lectures on the Doctrines of Christianity. By William Hampson, 1813." The following are among the concluding stanzas of this epistle.

Of all the beings form'd in blank despite  
 Of Nature's laws, when wrong usurps the right,  
 The most terrific, hateful, and accurst,  
 Of human kind—a Conqueror is the worst!  
 Rejoice, O Earth! the latest of thy race,  
 Has almost ended mad ambition's chase;  
 Be glad, O Heaven! if Angels sometimes cry  
 O'er human woes, those tears will turn to joy.  
 If this blest age, all Idol Gods o'erthrown,  
 Jehovah's worship only shall be known;  
 All shall enjoy his light, partake his feast,  
 "And own him from the greatest to the least."  
 Then shall thy views with clearer lustre shine,  
 And Christ's own evidence establish thine.

Dukinfield, March 8th, 1813.

Mr. Hampson wrote many less ambitious pieces, and several hymns which were sung on special occasions at Dukinfield. His pretty

"SONNET TO DUKINFIELD HALL,"  
 has often been quoted.

Seat of long ancestry, the wise, the brave,  
 The generous, the determin'd to be free,  
 How much, neglected mansion, now the grave  
 Of former greatness, owe we unto thee?  
 How much of legal right and liberty  
 (Infring'd by sovereign rule) was then main-  
 tain'd  
 When civil discord and dissension reign'd,  
 And Patriot valour kingly power withstood,  
 And Freedom's robe was stained by patriot  
 blood!  
 Here where oft met the Sabbath multitude  
 To pray, to praise, and hear heaven's high  
 behest—  
 Ah, how profan'd! Now beasts obscene in-  
 trude  
 And bats, and fowl, the sty's obstreperous  
 guest  
 Pollute sepulchred dust, and violate it's rest.

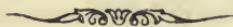
In the year 1822, a new hymn-book, super-  
 seding Enfield, was specially published for  
 the use of the congregation at Dukinfield  
 Chapel. Mr. Hampson, in conjunction with  
 the minister, the Rev. John Gaskell, M.A.,  
 edited this book. In addition to verse Mr.  
 Hampson also wrote some interesting prose  
 pieces, the chief of which is a "History of the  
 Presbyterian Chapel, Dukinfield." He con-  
 tributed to the Gentleman's Magazine; and  
 for the Monthly Repository of Theology and  
 General Literature, he wrote "Fragments of  
 the History of Religious Denominations in  
 Dukinfield." He also published "An Essay  
 on the Management of Cows," in 1796; and  
 contributed to the Transactions of the Society  
 of Arts, a paper "On the Means of Preventing  
 Caterpillars on Trees."

As already indicated, he was successful in  
 life, and became a magistrate for the counties  
 of Lancaster, Chester, and York. The Rev.  
 John Gaskell, who wrote a biographical notice  
 of Hampson for the Christian Reformer of  
 1835, says that "he was the first Dissenter in  
 the County of Chester, if not in the kingdom,  
 who qualified as a magistrate after the repeal

of the Test and Corporation Acts." He was a zealous member of the Dukinfield Unitarian congregation, but by no means bigoted, and was on good terms with the members of other denominations. "As a friendly adviser of individuals and families," says Mr. Gaskell,— "as a moderator between contending parties; as a counsellor whose kind and impartial opinions might at any time be solicited and received under the firmest conviction that the secrecy of friendship could be most religiously respected, he had few superiors in any rank or condition of life." He died on Nov. 18th, 1834, aged 64 years. There is a monument to his memory at Dukinfield Chapel, and he is several times referred to in Mr. Gordon's History of Dukinfield Chapel. His wife Hannah (born 1770, died March 18th, 1840) was a daughter of Robert and Sarah Hyde, her mother—the said Sarah,—being a daughter of the Rev. William Buckley (minister at Dukinfield, 1714-1752) by his marriage with Judith, posthumous daughter of Colonel Dukinfield.

Mr. Hampson left three daughters: The eldest and youngest died unmarried, but the second daughter, Sarah (who died 1890) married, January 15th, 1840, Charles Wallace (1796-1859), M.A., Glasgow, minister at Altrincham with Hale (1819-1856), and had a son who died young.

Note.—I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the kindness of the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., of the Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester, author of a "Historical Account of Dukinfield Chapel and its School," through whose assistance most of the details used in the foregoing sketch were placed in my hands.



## XI.

## "J A C K S T R A W

(JOHN ASHTON).

"Jack Straw," the "song maker" and ballad seller, was a local rhymer who flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. He lived in Hyde and Newton, and his real name was John Ashton. He was born in the year 1780, and there is a tradition that his people came from Hayfield. But at an early age he was living at Glass House Fold, opposite Hyde Hall, and there, after his marriage with a lass named Betty Ashton, some of his children were born. He spent the remainder of his life in either Hyde or Newton with the exception of occasional excursions to other districts, when a fit of wandering came upon him. Ashton was a spinner, and at one time worked for the Ashtons of Newton, but he appears to have been an indifferent workman, caring little whether he worked or played. There are some amusing stories told by old mill hands concerning his escapades. It should be stated that he was quite a character. He never would have a permanent job, and when he worked at all, he always "worked sick"—that is, he worked on "mules" which were temporarily vacated through the sickness of some regular spinner. He never desired any work when the period of the annual "Wakes" arrived. Like many characters of his time he was too fond of drink, and his shortcomings in this respect were well-known. On one occasion a new constable found him staggering homewards, and being anxious to get a "case," the "bobby" clapped the handcuffs on Ashton, and hauled him to the police station at Hyde. "What have you brought

this man here for?" asked the Superintendent, when "Jack Straw" was dragged into the office—"I found him drunk, sir," said the officer. To which the superior replied, "Why, man, he's never been sober for the last 20 years. Take him home; he's harmless." The discomfited policeman walked off with his staggering companion, who was not so drunk but that he knew what was happening. He placed his arm in that of the officer, and leaned his weight upon the latter. Ashton lived far up in Newton at the time, and when they got to the foot of Commercial Brow the policeman had had enough of the job. "You're all right," said he, "You'll find your way home now." "Nay, lad," responded Ashton, "I shan't. Thy mester said tha' had to tak me home, and I'll take jolly good care tha' does so, too. I'll teach thee to lock me up, that I will." And again leaning heavily on the luckless officer, he allowed himself to be slowly hauled up the brow, and so home.

On another occasion he was found apparently asleep on Hough Hill, and a tramp bent on robbery put his hand into Ashton's pocket. "It's no good, lad," said the victim, quite composed, "Thou art too late. I've had my hand in theer before thee, and there's nowt left."

He often said that it would take two to rob him,—"one to put money in his pocket, and another to take it out."

Ashton became associated with the Luddites, and when the military paraded the district, he found it expedient to be away from Hyde for several months. During his absence his house was searched by the soldiers, who probed the beds with their bayonets to see if he lay concealed within.

For a good portion of his life Ashton played the role of

**PEDLAR AND BALLAD SELLER,"**

going about the district disposing of old ballads and songs in sheet form. In order to evade the law, he made it a custom to carry a number of pieces of straw; these he sold to his customers for the value of a ballad, and then made a free gift of the ballad to the purchaser.

"Buy a straw off me, and I will give you a song"—was his form of address when seeking to dispose of his wares, and this fashion of trading he carried on for years. From this custom he received the name of "Jack Straw," an appellation which clung to him through life, so much so that many people who knew him well were unaware of his real name. Having plenty of native wit, he seems to have been possessed of some gifts in the art of rhyming, and some of the country songs which he sold were his own composition. His rhymes cannot be classed as poetry, indeed some of them are the veriest doggerel, and are only worth re-producing as curiosities, and as mementoes of the old time when ballad mongers flourished. His principal effort was that one-time well-known song

**"GEE CROSS FAIR,"**

a few stray verses of which are appended:

Come, all ye farmers far and near,  
Of Gee Cross Fair you soon shall hear,  
For old Kester Howard, as I've heard them  
tell,

He brought an ass to the fair for to sell;  
Its wind was broke, its limbs were stark,  
And he durst not show till after dark.

Fol lol lay raddle al the de, etc.

At after dark it did come on,  
And he praised it for a donn one;  
He primed its tail, and rubbed its throat,  
And sold his ass for a one pound note.

Fol lol lay raddle al the de, etc.

There were twenty battles and blows between,  
 But old \*Else Kettle were never seen;  
 But Isaac Fat Cake fought his share  
 For to end up of Gee Cross Fair.  
 Fol lol lay raddle al the de, etc.

\*The reason old Else Kettle was never seen  
 he was serving time in one of Her Majesty's  
 mansions.

Ashton also wrote on nearly every event of  
 local or national importance, and among his  
 pieces was one with the refrain—

“When Manchester is a seaport town.”  
 Another of his rhymes dealt with a dispute  
 at Turner's Mill, Godley, and a part of it thus  
 ran:

“Old Joe Turner's weavers have no sense  
 To weave a cut for eighteen pence;  
 Eighteenpence will never do,  
 To keep a wife and family, too.”

Unfortunately I have not been able to obtain a complete copy of any of “Jack Straw's” writings. Indeed, the above extracts have been recited to me by old men who had heard Ashton himself sing them when they were children.

By those who remember him, Ashton is described as an old man who wore old-fashioned knee breeches of velvet, and had buckles on his shoes. He died at Newion on the 11th of January, 1860, being then in his 80th year, and was buried at Mottram Church. The day of the funeral was very wet, but so famous had Ashton become that the inclemency of the weather did not prevent crowds of people from attending. Mourning coaches were not known in those days, and the funeral procession consisted of over a score of spring carts. Fully 100 persons attended the funeral, and there was an abundance of rosemary and “buryin' cakes”

John Ashton had a family who survived him, and his descendants are still living in Newton. I am well acquainted with them. They do not in the least resemble the rhymers, and they are among the most respectable and highly respected inhabitants of the borough of Hyde.

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## XII.

### FRANCIS DUKINFIELD ASTLEY.

Francis Dukinfield Astley, the poet, was Lord of the Manor of Dukinfield, and was the son of John Astley, the painter, by his third wife, Mary Wagstaffe, of Manchester. He was born in 1781.

The Astleys were an ancient family, said to be descended from one Philip de Estlega, of Estley, in Warwickshire, in the reign of Henry II. From this Philip, descended Sir Thomas Astley, of Patshall, near Wem, Salop, whose son Richard died in 1645. Richard's son, Edward, was a benefactor of Wem School. Thomas Astley, the son of Edward, sold the family estates in 1684. His grandson, Dr. Astley, of Wem, was the father of John Astley, the portrait painter. John Astley, the painter, was a friend of, and fellow pupil with, Reynolds. He is said to have attended an assembly at Knutsford, where he so captivated Lady Dukinfield-Daniel, that she requested him to paint her portrait, and on the completion of the task, intimated to him that "if he was pleased with the portrait he might have the original." Lady Dukinfield-Daniel was the widow of Sir William Dukinfield (who assumed the name of Daniel on succeeding to the property of the Daniels of Over Tabley). Sir

William, who was lord of the Manor of Dukinfield, settled his estates upon his widow, and some years after her marriage with John Astley, she granted them to him absolutely. The Dukinfields had formerly lived at Dukinfield Hall, but John Astley built Dukinfield Lodge, which henceforth became the seat of the Lords of the Manor. Previous to his marriage with Lady Dukinfield-Daniel, he was a widower, and had one child, a daughter, Sophia, who afterwards became the mother of Captain Hyde John Clarke, R.N., J.P., of Hyde. After the death of his second wife, he married Mary Wagstaffe, of Manchester, and had issue of her, Francis Dukinfield-Astley, the poet, who succeeded to the estates on the death of his father in 1787. The widow of John Astley afterwards married the Rev. the Hon. Robert Hay, Vicar of Rochdale. She died in 1832.

Francis Dukinfield Astley received part of his education at the parsonage, Gee Cross, Hyde, from the then pastor of Hyde Chapel. He was a liberal supporter of the fine arts, and spent large sums in

#### DEVELOPING THE DUKINFIELD ESTATES.

He planted there over 40,000 trees, an effort which won for him in 1807 the silver medal of the Society for the Improvement of Agriculture. He commenced iron works in the township, but as they were a complete failure he sunk a fortune in the enterprise, and is further represented to have lost large sums through his benevolent efforts to mitigate the distress caused in the district at the time of the war with France. Mr. Astley's income must have been very small at that period, since he is said to have remitted the rents of his tenants on account of the distress then prevalent. But the discovery of large

deposits of coal on the estate opened up a source of enormous wealth. Mr. Astley, like each of the heads of his family, filled the office of High Sheriff of Cheshire, and, in the words of a local writer, his procession was "attended by such a retinue of friends and tenants as was probably never equalled in Cheshire, and with a profuse splendour which is yet remembered as a notable event in the county, and especially in the city of Chester."

The present article, however, is chiefly concerned with Mr. F. D. Astley's

#### LITERARY WORK.

He wrote verse from an early age, and several of his pieces had reference to local events. He was a great lover of field sports, and for the purposes of festive enjoyments he built what was known as "The Hunter's Tower." This building was opened on February 27th, 1807, the day being very stormy. Mr. Astley thus commemorated the occasion in song.

#### HUNTER'S SONG.

##### AIR—"YE GENTLEMEN OF ENGLAND."

Hark! how with northern fury the gales  
around us blow,  
And bear upon their angry wings the chase-  
forbidding snow;  
What though, from storms opposing, our hunt-  
ing we forego,  
Let our wine, in bumpers shine,  
Though the stormy winds do blow.

Whilst Bacchus holds his empire here, Diana  
sure will join,  
And when we tell our gallant runs, we'll  
pledge her sports in wine,  
For from her sports proceeding health gives  
the ruddy glow,  
Driving care and despair  
Though the stormy winds do blow.

Should Venus hither lead her court, and leave  
 the cyprian bower,  
 And love invite the blooming maid to grace  
 this favoured tower,  
 Then, as from lips of beauty consenting  
 accents flow,  
 The hail and rain may rage in vain,  
 And the stormy whirlwinds blow.

Who thinks of toil or danger, as o'er opposing  
 rocks,  
 Deep vales, woods, heaths, and mountains we  
 urge the subtle fox,  
 And when the sport is over with joy we home-  
 ward go,  
 And the gay chase in song retrace,  
 Though the stormy winds do blow.

In 1819 Mr. Astley printed a collection of his poems in book form. The following extracts will give some idea of his style and power.

#### ULLABY.

"Softly the breezes of night  
 Sweep o'er the whispering wood;  
 Star of the evening, thy light  
 Sleeps on the breast of the flood;  
 Till the first beams of the east  
 Shine yon gay turrets upon,  
 Calm, O my Prince, be thy rest,  
 Sleep, O my darling, sleep on.

The following lines were written by Mr. Astley in

#### REPLY TO A LADY.

who had suggested to him that he ought to leave Dukinfield because it was rapidly becoming soiled by trade and colliery working, and take up his residence in some prettier spot amid rural scenery. They are included in his volume of poems, and the sentiment they express will certainly win for their writer a warm tribute from the masses whose hard lot it is to be COMPELLED to live in the neighbourhood Mr. Astley was advised to shun.

"Thou bid'st me to fly from the place of my  
 birth  
 In search of society, friendship, and health;  
 'Tis a wish I should think most disgusting on  
 earth,—  
 The land which supplies me with comfort and  
 wealth.

Thou bidst the thick cloud of oblivion to roll  
 O'er the scenes where the sunshine of youth  
 beamed so bright;  
 Which witnessed the first lively joys of the  
 soul;  
 Ah, wouldest thou consign me to darkness and  
 night?

Thou mayst say that this land is by commerce  
 debased,  
 That its people, its manners, its customs are  
 rude—  
 Should the love, then, of home from the breast  
 be erased,  
 Because our poor neighbours must toil for  
 their food?

And my home has its charms, O believe me,  
 my Fair,  
 That heart must be callous that owns not its  
 spell;  
 To urge then a wish so repugnant forbear.  
 Nor ask me to bid this, my birthplace, fare-  
 well.

Francis Dukinfield Astley died in 1825, and was buried at Dukinfield. By his wife, Susan Fishe, the daughter of John Palmer, he had issue Francis Dukinfield Palmer Astley, who was High Sheriff in 1854. The last-named had issue a son who died unmarried in 1880, and three daughters, Gertrude Susan, who married A. W. Nicholson, Esq.; Constance Charlotte; and Beatrice Emma Astley, who married John Frederick Cheetham, Esq., of Eastwood, Stalybridge.



## XIII.

THE WELSH BARD OF STALYBRIDGE  
(JOHN JONES).

John Jones, known to literary fame as a Stalybridge poet, was born in the year 1788, in the village of Llanasa, in North Wales, his father being a farmer in humble circumstances. When only eight years old, the boy began to work in the cotton mill at Holywell, but during his seven years' stay at the mill, he managed to acquire a fair amount of learning. In 1804 he decided upon following a sea-faring occupation, and embarked at Liverpool for Guinea. The year following he entered on board His Majesty's frigate "Barbadoes," a vessel which, besides capturing several important prizes whilst on a West Indian cruise, was also the means of giving Nelson intelligence that the combined fleet he was in search of had sailed for Europe. Jones subsequently served on board the "Saturn," 74 gun frigate, under Lord Collingwood, off Cadiz, and also on the "Royal Sovereign," in the Mediterranean, under Lord Exmouth and Sir Sidney Smith. At the conclusion of the general peace, Jones returned to his employment in a cotton mill at Holywell. In 1820 he removed to Stalybridge, and it was whilst living here that he composed most of his poems. He issued a small volume of 44 pages, entitled "Home and other Poems" in 1841; this book was printed by Thomas Eyre Phillips, Old Cross, Ashton-under-Lyne, and was dedicated to Charles Hindley, Esq., M.P. In 1848 he again published a booklet of 44 pages, under the title of "The Welsh Cottage and other Poems." The printers this time were J. Brierley and Sons, Rassbottom-street, Stalybridge; and the book

was dedicated "To Lord Viscount Fielding, and to Viscountess Fielding, of Downing." In 1850 a collected edition of his works was published by T. Smith, printer, 211, Great Ancoats Street, Manchester; the title of the book was "Poems by John Jones, at one time in the Royal Navy, and since a cotton carder in Manchester and its neighbourhood"; and the dedication is "To William Fairbairn, C.E., F.R.S., etc., etc., in grateful acknowledgment of numerous acts of kindness and great generosity during a long course of years." Copies of Jones' work are now, needless to say, very scarce, but the Manchester Reference Library, King-street, possesses copies of the three publications already mentioned. To that of 1856 is attached a brief biography of the poet. John Jones died in 1858, and is buried at Grosvenor Square Chapel, Stalybridge.

The following extracts from his works will convey a good idea of his style and merits:

#### THE COTTON MILL.

The mill, I sing, a theme unsung before,  
And growth of cotton on Columbia's shore;  
The various branches of this useful trade  
Demand, O Muses! your unbounded aid,  
A splendid structure, wondrous to behold,  
Where crowds, unconscious of the piercing  
cold,  
Court fair Industry, and their toil pursue,  
Such toil as sons of China never knew,  
Who, though they boast of their superior skill,  
Might reap instruction from a British Mill!  
Here belts and rollers, spindles, shafts and  
gear,  
And strange machinery to the sight appear;  
Wheel within wheel, in curious order rise,  
Of various metal, and of various size:  
Bands crossed and open, numerous here  
abound,  
While pleasing discords in the ear resound,  
Like the low murmurs, when the rising breeze  
Disturbs the surface of the ample seas.

STALYBRIDGE AND ITS NEW SET OF  
BELLS.

Hail, Stalybridge! with joyful eyes  
I view each grand improvement made;  
I see around new structures rise,  
Auspicious to the sons of trade!  
Bright wisdom, darting from the skies,  
To industry imparts her aid,  
While fame and fortune, and renown,  
Smile on this fast improving town.

With pride I see majestic fanes,  
Of late, erected here and there;  
Their organs, pews, and coloured panes,  
And all things most divinely fair;  
But, hark! the bells yon tower sustains  
Load with harmonious notes the air;  
'Tis their first peal, for ne'er, I trow,  
Had Stalybridge such charms till now.

Let neighbouring towns no longer boast  
Of their melodious sounding bells;  
For Stalybridge can rival most  
Of those whose fame so widely swells  
Yon clock, too, whatsoe'er it cost,  
To passers-by most kindly tells  
The time. How solemn from yon tower,  
To hear proclaimed the midnight hour.

Hail, Stalybridge! since new delights are  
thine,  
No longer bow to Ashton-under-Lyne;  
For thou canst now, without presumptious  
glee,  
Boast of harmonious bells as well as she;  
Now list attentive to the joyful sounds,  
Such as before ne'er charmed these humble  
bounds;  
On wings aerial let them ride abroad  
Till heard at Staley and at Mottram Road,  
Till Hydes, the Hollins, and old Currier-lane  
Now hear, astonished, their melodious strain  
Ring on, ye merry set, ring on, ring on  
loud as Bow Bells, that spoke to Whittington,  
The nobler sons of Industry are here,  
Then let your sweet congratulations cheer.

One day, being at Stalybridge with a literary friend, I happened to pass the Grosvenor Chapel, and quite by chance my eye fell upon a handsome memorial tablet which has been erected in front of the chapel to the memory

of Jones. The inscription on it speaks of him as the Welsh Bard. Desirous of viewing his grave, we tried the gates of the graveyard, and finding them locked moved down a side street to a large and high wooden door. That, too, was barred, but a grimy little urchin sat astride it, high above our heads. "Th' durs fast," said he, "Bur aw' con undo it." With that he dropped over the gate, and in a few seconds gave us admission. We found the poet's resting-place, in a rank part of the burial ground, frowned down upon by a sombre-looking mill. There was grass about, but it was not green—the dirt and smoke from the cotton mills had begrimed it. The plot of ground was shut in by mills and houses; and one could not avoid thinking what a great contrast there was in the bright little Welsh birth-place of the poet, and the gloomy spot where he lies at rest.

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#### XIV.

##### THOMAS KENWORTHY.

##### "THE DUKINFIELD POET."

This versifier was born in 1790. His works appear to have been appreciated by the people of his own day, for on November 30th, 1865, a benefit entertainment was given on his behalf in the Mechanics' Institute, Stalybridge. He is frequently referred to in the literary reports of that period as "the bard of Dukinfield." In one of the biographical sketches which appear in Samuel Laycock's "Warblin's fro' an owd Songster," the following passage occurs:—"Another notable incident in his connection with Stalybridge, was a gathering of

poets in the Mechanics' Institute for the purpose of promoting a benefit to Thomas Kenworthy, author of the song called "The Iron-bound Bucket." The poets in attendance, and who read selections from their own works, included John Critchley Prince, Ben Brierley, and Edwin Waugh." In Laycock's collection of poems is one addressed "to my old friend, Thomas Kenworthy." The poet Kenworthy was among that distinguished band of literary men who attended the funeral, and gathered bareheaded around the open grave of John Critchley Prince in 1866. Kenworthy died in 1869. The following poem was written by Kenworthy after he had been present at a dinner given at the Astley Arms Inn, to the old people of Dukinfield, on September 30th, 1850.

#### OLD FOLKS' DINNER AT DUKINFIELD.

In Dukinfield, the other day,  
A famous feast was given away,  
And old folks had got naught to pay;  
    The rich ones took a part in.  
'Twas made for women and for men  
Who had seen three score years and ten,  
And such at least I think again,  
    Will ne'er be seen for sartin.  
We'd everything both full and fine,  
Roast beef, plum pudding, ale and wine;  
And when we sat us down to dine,  
    What rows of furrow'd faces.  
The waiters came, so neat and pat,  
Do you choose this? do you choose that?  
Will you take lean? will you take fat?  
    But we all took our places.

We'd got the famous quadrille band,  
"It look'd, it look'd," so very grand,  
I wonder'd how such things were  
    plann'd—  
    To me 'twas quite a riddle.  
In my young days they danc'd quite gay,  
And each one did their pennies pay;  
Old Billy-Cockey play'd away  
    Upon his fine-ton'd fiddle.

Old women talk'd of fashions past,  
Of pretty prints and colours fast,  
And how folk's lot in life was cast;  
    Of shining silk that rustles.  
In my young days they wore a hoop  
Till they could scarcely benu or stoop,  
And on each sleeve a silken loop,  
    No Jenny Linds or bustles.

The old men talk'd of hunting days,  
Of wakes, fairs, of balls and plays;  
And some gave Billy Pitt great praise  
    For keeping the vile war up.  
They talk'd of Peninsula wars,  
And stripp'd to show their wounds and  
    scars;  
Old Neptune's sons, and sons of Mars  
Had nearly kick'd a flare up.

We all broke up in order quite,  
And bade every friend a good, good  
    night,  
Now was not that a glorious sight?  
The feast was in September.  
I'll offer up my fervent prayers,  
For host and hostess, and their heirs;  
And should I live a hundred years,  
    That day I shall remember.

## XV.

GEORGE SMITH,  
OF DUKINFIELD AND STALYBRIDGE.

This writer has an immortality apart from the merit attached to his works, inasmuch as he was the man to whom John Critchley Prince addressed his well-known and often quoted "Epistle to a Brother Poet." Smith was born near Mossley in 1793, and as a boy was sent to work in a cotton mill at Stalybridge. In later life he became the landlord at the Commercial Inn, Stalybridge. An admirer of his works writes as follows: "I once paid a visit to the Commercial Inn,

where I saw the poet. He was a smart-looking man, very gentlemanly in his appearance and manner, and seemed to me to occupy a false position as landlord of a publichouse. He looked fit to be a leader of society, and to hold a position requiring a greater amount of intelligence than that necessary for the making of a successful boniface. Smith eventually removed to Ashton-under-Lyne, where he died in 1860. He is buried at Dukinfield Old Chapel."

Smith's verse was far above the average, and the critics are high in its praise. The sample of his work given here is that most frequently quoted. It is taken from a publication entitled "City Muse," issued by Messrs. Abel Heywood and Sons, Manchester, in 1853.

#### THE NEGLECTED BARD.

Child of the Lyre, 'tis hard of thee to sing  
 When stern reverses bind thy soaring wing;—  
 Bind it to earth, and yet there's beauty there,—  
 Food for the mind, as delicate and rare  
 As poets need to banquet on;—a store  
 Thou may'st partake until the soul runs o'er.  
 And yet 'tis sad for genius to behold  
 The eyes of soulless men, all calm and cold,  
 Pass o'er the beauties of his written thought,—  
 So feelingly, so musically wrought;—  
 Woven and interwoven with each change  
 Of the blest seasons, in their varied range  
 Of bud, and flower, and fruit of many hues,  
 Pendant above fructifying dews;  
 Of cloudless noon, of crimson sunset fair,  
 Of twilight's hallow'd hour of silent prayer,  
 When his serene, aspiring thoughts ascend  
 From a pure source of worship, thence to blend  
 With all that's beautiful in earth and skies.  
 Shrined in his soul, and mirror'd in his eyes,

Glomy incentives to a soul imbued  
 With all the poetry of gratitude,—  
 That spiritual music of his lyre,  
 Which, but for hope, in silence would expire.  
 Now that lone harp, in many a bitter pang  
 Wails in its master's woe, where once it  
 sweetly sang.

## XVI.

## AN OLD SONG ON MOTTRAM WAKES.

Samuel Cottrell is chiefly known to fame as the writer of a song entitled "Mottram Wakes." This song seems to have been very popular at one time, and I have heard old men sing it. Quite recently, and much to my surprise, I heard it sung in chorus by a bevy of school children who were playing in the streets. Mr. Samuel Hadfield, the Denton antiquary, was very fond of it, and the version given here is copied from one in his collection. Cottrell wrote several other pieces. Mr. Samuel Hill, in his latest edition of "Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers," states that Cottrell was born in 1799, and died in 1837; and that he was a spinner at a mill in Stalybridge. I am not aware that any other author has written about him.

Let's go to Mottram Wakes,  
 Bonny lassie, O;  
 Put on thy Sunday gown,  
 Which was bought in London town,  
 It's a very pretty brown,  
 Bonny lassie, O.  
 Then arm in arm we'll stray,  
 Bonny lassie, O.  
 Till we get to the Sand Mill,  
 And we'll jog along the way,  
 At the top of Stayley,  
 There we'll have a foaming gill,  
 Bonny lassie, O.  
 When we get to Mottram town,  
 Bonny lassie, O,  
 We will wander up and down,  
 See the standings all in rows,  
 And we'll go and see the shows,  
 Mr. Punch, with his big nose,  
 Bonny lassie, O.  
 Through the churchyard next we'll roam,  
 Bonny lassie, O,  
 Read the verses on the tomb-stone,  
 Where many a lass once gay,  
 Lies mouldering in the clay,  
 And once as fair as day,  
 Bonny lassie, O.

Through the church then we will go,  
 Bonny lassie, O,  
 Have a peep at Mr. Roe,  
 Likewise his lovely bride,  
 Who is sleeping by his side,  
 For 'tis said that saints they died,  
 Bonny lassie, O.

Then we'll call at the Church Stile,  
 Bonny lassie, O,  
 And there we'll have a reel,  
 Where the girls do dance so gay,  
 And the music they do play;  
 Oh we'll have a merry day,  
 Bonny lassie, O.

When the church bells they do ring,  
 Bonny lassie, O,  
 And the jolly boys do sing,  
 Some fighting there will be,  
 Just to finish up the spree;  
 It's a jolly sight to see,  
 Bonny lassie, O.

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## XVII.

## JOSEPH HIBBERT, OF HYDE.

Of the many scribblers and versifiers that the town of Hyde has produced, one of those most deserving of notice was the subject of this brief sketch. During his lifetime his pen was never long idle, and he wrote verse and prose articles upon a multitude of subjects. He has shared the fate common to most local authors, and the bulk of his work is not known to the present generation. Joseph Hibbert was born on December 10th, 1802, at Royton, near Oldham, but when very young went to live at Flower Field, Hyde. Whilst still a boy he went, along with his father, to work at Ashton's Mill as a cotton operative, and continued in this occupation until his talents as a scholar led the first Thomas Ashton (father of the first Mayor of Hyde, and grandfather of Mr. T. Gair Ashton, M.P.) to make him teacher of the

Flowery Field Day School. Ill-health, however, compelled him to relinquish his position, and he then took to writing. In 1852 he removed from Flowery Field to a house in King-street, off George-street, Hyde. Mr. Hibbert was of a religious disposition, and for years was a class-leader, and a local preacher at the Methodist New Connexion Chapel, George-street, Hyde. He appears to have been a frequenter of the literary circle (which included John Critchley Prince), which met at George Booth's printshop, Hyde; and most of his work was published by Mr. Booth. Besides fugitive pieces, he wrote a book of "Poems for Recitation," "A Catechism on Creation" a work designed for Sunday Schools; and several little booklets of prose. The following fragments are taken from a poem which appeared in a small booklet of 56 pages, published for the author by "H. Slater, Printer, Hyde."

#### SABBATH SCHOOL.

O, how delightful, how sublime,  
To hear so many children sing,  
With cheerful melody to time  
The praises of our heavenly King.

More pleasing still when heart and voice,  
With understanding do unite,  
In songs of praise and love rejoice,  
And hearts elated with delight.

And, O, how pleasing 'tis to see,  
Hundreds bow in solemn prayer,  
In pure devotion bend the knee,  
To Him who does for children care.

The prayer of faith will surely rise,  
Like incense to the courts above;  
And draw from heaven fresh supplies,  
Of grace and strength and heavenly love.

Much of Hibbert's work was cast in the form of hymns which were popular among the religious body of which he was a member.

Here is a sample verse, taken from a hymn entitled "The Lord thy God."

All them that feared Jeshurun's God,  
Oft met together in His name;  
Thus they endured affliction's rod,  
And thus they fed the pious flame.

He also wrote verses upon the principal events of local note. I have one before me as I write—a poem in manuscript, written by him immediately after the explosion of the steam boiler at Bailey Field Mill, October 27th, 1834.

But Mr. Hibbert's best known work was a *le r ghy play* in blank verse, printed by Geo. Booth, of Hyde, in April, 1846, and now published by Mr. John Heywood, of Manchester. It was very successful, and is still much sought after, and often performed by amateur dramatic societies. The present writer himself has played the title role in this piece. It is entitled "Joseph," and deals with the life story of that great Biblical character.

Joseph Hibbert also wrote a curious little book entitled—"A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Life and Happy Death of Hannah Halliday, a member of the Methodist New Connexion Church, Hyde, Ashton Circuit," which was published by Mr. Geo. Booth, printer, of Hyde, in 1846. Mr. Hibbert died on March 10th, 1875, aged 72 years, and was buried in the graveyard adjoining the Methodist New Connexion Chapel, George-street, Hyde. The graveyard has since been converted into a playground for the children of the day school, and the inscriptions on the gravestones are becoming worn away by the clogs and shoes of the children. But I was fortunate enough to find the poet's grave close to the chapel wall, very little the worse for the tramping to which it has been subjected.

## XVIII.

## THE REV. JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS.

This distinguished individual was better known as an agitator, and an advocate of the people's rights, than as a poet. He was a man who possessed to a wonderful degree the power of moving the masses, and an old Chartist who heard him often, recently told the writer that he had seen Stephens address meetings attended by thousands of people, and hold his audience spellbound for hours by his eloquence, whilst his clear resonant voice never failed to teach the furthest ranks of the crowd, no matter how great the number of hearers might be.

Joseph Rayner Stephens was born at Edinburgh on March 8th, 1805, but his father was a Cornwall man, who had been a Methodist preacher at Penzance. In 1827 the father was president of the Wesleyan Conference. The son, Joseph, received part of his education at the Manchester Grammar School, and became proficient as a linguist. In his 21st year he entered the Wesleyan ministry, and from 1826 to 1830, acted as minister in Sweden, where he preached once a week in the Swedish language. In 1830 he was stationed at Cheltenham; in 1832 appointed to the Ashton Circuit; but in 1834, whilst stationed at Stalybridge, he was, on account of his views, asked by the Wesleyans to resign his position as a minister of their church. He afterwards established a number of chapels of his own, and his ministrations in them were very successful.

Mr. Stephen's sympathies were strongly on the side of the operative classes, and he threw himself with great vigour into the agitation for the Ten Hours' Bill. He was frequently

the principal speaker at Chartist gatherings, and moved about the country addressing meetings in the open-air, which were attended by thousands of people. The language he used was sometimes very strong, and in the eyes of the authorities was seditious. At various meetings in Hyde his utterances were such as to cause the greatest excitement, and finally led to his arrest, and trial at Chester, in August, 1839, when he was charged with "attending an unlawful meeting at Hyde on the 14th of Nov., 1838, seditiously and tumultuously met together by torchlight, and with firearms disturbing the public peace. The speech which he made in his defence took over five hours to deliver; but he was found guilty, and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment. After his release Mr. Stephens resumed his political activity, which he continued up to the day of his death—February 18th, 1897. He was buried at St. John's Church, Dukinfield. The Christening Font from his old chapel at King-street, Stalybridge, was placed as a monument above his grave.

Amid all his speech-making and political bustle, Stephens found time to write poetry. He was not one of the best poets of the district, and was chiefly distinguished as a writer by the purity of his poems, and the definite lessons which they taught. But some of his lines are very smart, and all his verse was above the average of local composition. Two typical specimens are appended:—

#### SCATTER THE SEED.

Scatter the seed! the seed of truth,  
 Believing it will grow;  
 Look on the wilderness of ruth,  
 It was not always so.  
 A garden once, it may again  
 A lovely garden be;  
 It wants the sun, it wants the rain,  
 Of God-like charity.

Scatter the seed! the wholesome seed  
 Of knowledge manifold,  
 And time will deck the flowery mead  
 With blended white and gold.  
 No leaf so green as knowledge flings  
 Unfading o'er the mind;  
 No fruit so sweet as wisdom brings—  
 Rich fruit of every kind.

Scatter the seed! the teeming seed,  
 Wide as the world abroad;  
 Soon it will show itself indeed  
 The garden of our God.  
 We work and wait—we toil and trust,  
 Sure that the end will come;  
 This wilderness of evil must  
 Be clothed with heavenly bloom!

A poem by Stephens appeared in the Ashton Chronicle and District Advertiser, No. 38, entitled

#### FELLOWSHIP,

from which the following extracts are taken:

Few are the moments we can steal from care,  
 Forgetful of the griefs each breast conceals;  
 And fewer still the happy hours we share,  
 With those who have a heart that warmly  
 feels  
 The woes we feel, or throbs with kindred joy,  
 Rare spirits, 'midst our false world's base  
 alloy.

And when in this life's motley, giddy, round,  
 Where all are seen, where few are known or  
 loved;  
 We meet a heart too daring to be bound  
 By Fashion's rule, too noble to be woo'd  
 By Pleasure's dazzling wiles—we quit the  
 dance,  
 For souls like these each kindred heart en-  
 trance.

Peace, then, thou troubled heart! and learn  
 to bear  
 The wholesome trials that thy course attend;  
 The very ills that fret thy breast and fear  
 Thy wounded spirit, shall yet comfort send;  
 For He who tries thee is thy Friend above,  
 And loveth thee with all a father's love.

## XIX.

JOHN CRITCHLEY PRINCE,

"THE BARD OF HYDE."

John Critchley Prince, author of "Hours with the Muses," was something more than a local poet; he was one of a band of gifted singers and prominent literary men—self-taught be it said—whose names are household words in the great industrial hive about cottonopolis. In his day Prince was a great force in the active life of the manufacturing north, and probably no writer ever exercised a greater power over the people, or pleaded more eloquently for the emancipation of the sons of toil. Just as Burns was the bard and wonder of the farmer-folk of Ayr, so was Prince the wonder, the product, and the pride of the factory workers of Lancashire. His lays cheered them through long years of weary labour, filled them with fresh hopes and aspirations, and now when the writer has gone to rest, their melody still lingers, and many weary hearts are gladdened by its sound. Certainly the title of "Lancashire Laureate" which has been bestowed upon him by some of his warmest admirers is by no means too extravagant a term to apply to a writer of merit such as his.

Prince's life was a sad romance: it was a long

## FIGHT WITH POVERTY

and evil influence. Popularly known during his lifetime as "The Bard of Hyde," he was not a native of that town, but was born at Wigan, in Lancashire, on June 21st, 1808. He was brought up amid the greatest poverty, and was never sent to school. His education was obtained solely from his mother, and from the

teachers of a Sunday School. The Princes eventually settled in Hyde, where the poet married in 1826, when under 19 years of age. His home life hitherto had been rendered miserable by the brutality of his father,—a coarse, drunken man, who often thrashed him, and strove by every possible means to repress his natural love for knowledge; and now he had established a home of his own, other obstacles to domestic happiness appeared. The trade of reed-making for weavers which he followed was in a bad state, his income was very small and uncertain, and when a young family appeared it took the united efforts of both parents to procure even a bare subsistence. Misled by glowing accounts of the prospects of artizans in France, Prince at length left his family, and went abroad

#### IN SEARCH OF FORTUNE.

Disappointment, however, met him on the Continent; the greatest distress prevailed, and unable to obtain work, he found himself a beggar in a strange country, possessing no knowledge of the language. In the middle of the winter of 1831 he left Mulhausen to return to Hyde. He followed the romantic wanderings of the Rhine, exploring the ruined castles, and visiting the principal scenes of legendary lore. Travelling through Strasbourg, Nancy, Rheims, Chalons, and most of the principal cities, he at length arrived in Calais, having subsisted on the charity of the few English residents he had met with on the way. A passage was procured for him by the British Consul at Calais, and he at length set foot again in England. On his return Prince first applied for food and shelter at a workhouse in Kent, and was cast into a filthy garret with 12 other unfortunates, some of whom

were in a high state of fever; indeed, the dawn of the next day found his bedfellow dead. From here he proceeded with bare feet to London, begging in the daytime, and sleeping in the open fields at night. A portion of his clothing he sold at "Rag Fair" for 8 pence, which treasure he spent partly in allaying the dreadful cravings of hunger, and partly in the purchase of paper and writing materials. Entering a neighbouring tavern, he wrote as much of his own poetry as the paper would contain, and that task done, he went round to a number of booksellers, hoping to dispose of the manuscript for a shilling or two. But disappointment again met him, and after staying in London a short time—lying on the stones of some gateway at night, he left the metropolis and set off northward. His biographer tells us that he slept in barns, vagrant offices, under hay-stacks, in the lowest of lodging-houses; one day he ground corn at Birmingham, another he sang ballads at Leicester, the cool night wind found him sleeping under the oaks of Sherwood Forest, and finally he rested his weary limbs in the "lock-up" at Bakewell. By perseverance, however, he at length reached Hyde, only to find that his wife, unable to sustain herself and children, had been obliged to apply for parish relief, and was then in the workhouse at Wigan. Prince hurried off to that town, removed his family to Manchester, where he took a bare garret, and without furniture of any sort, with a bundle of straw for a bed, the wretched family remained several months. The Princes subsequently returned to Hyde, where a fairer fortune smiled upon them than had been the case in former years.

It was not until 1841 that Prince commenced the

## PUBLICATION OF HIS POEMS

in book-form by issuing "Hours with the Muses." He contributed at different times to the Manchester periodicals, and to three now defunct local magazines—"Microscope," "Phoenix," and "Companion." The popularity of his poems, and the success of his first book led him to publish further collections of his pieces, and in 1847 his second volume, "Dreams and Realities" appeared. This was followed by "The Poetic Rosary" in 1850, "Autumn Leaves" in 1856, and "Miscellaneous Poems" in 1861.

The publication of "Hours with the Muses" brought Prince numbers of friends, but unfortunately he became a prey to habits of intemperance. He seems to have fallen into an unsettled state, sometimes working at his old trade of reed-making, often hanging about the country, and chiefly depending for subsistence on the profits of the five successive volumes which issued from his pen. An attempt was made to secure for him a pension, which, although fruitless as far as its main effort was concerned, won for him a grant from the Royal Bounty. He died at Hyde in 1866, and was buried in St. George's Churchyard, where a headstone commemorating his works has been erected over his grave by a few admiring friends.

In 1880, a complete collection of his writings, and an excellent and lengthy biography of the poet by Dr. R. Douglas Lithgow, L.L.D., was published by Messrs. Abel Heywood and Sons, of Manchester.

In 1901 Prince's memory was

PUBLICLY HONOURED

by the presentation to the Corporation of Hyde

of a life-sized portrait which is now hanging in the Hyde Free Library. As I had a share in bringing this about, a word of personal reminiscence will not be out of place. My friend James Leigh, the poet, got into conversation one day with a gentleman who expressed his willingness to contribute £5 if anyone would promote a memorial of Critchley Prince. The offer was printed by a mutual friend, Samuel Hill, in his first edition of "Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers," and thus it came to my notice. I thought the matter over for a time, and then suggested to my friend John Macdiarmid, the artist, that he should paint a portrait of Prince, and assured him that I was confident we could raise the money to buy it. Mr. MacDiarmid agreed, and the portrait was painted in secret from an old photograph. I then called to our aid Mr. James Bradley (author of *Reminiscences in the Life of Joshua Bradley*); and he at once fell in with the idea, and set to work with a zeal that meant success. A committee was formed of Messrs. Bradley, Thomas Kenworthy, Samuel Ashton, James Leigh, and myself;—the meetings, of which were held at my house. Mr. James Bradley and I were secretaries. After a time the money was forthcoming, the picture paid for, and a grand demonstration took place at the Mechanics' Institution on Wednesday, March 6th, 1901, when amidst a great gathering of poets and literary men of Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire, presided over by the Rev. H. E. Dowson, Mr. Joel Wainwright unveiled the picture, and presented it on behalf of the members to the town. Alderman Smith, the deputy-Mayor, accepted the picture on behalf of the town. A magnificent address was delivered on the occasion by Sir William Bailey, Knt., of Salford. Another interesting feature of

the gathering was the presence of the sister of John Critchley Prince, and several nephews and nieces of the poet.

The works of Prince are worthy of close study. His

#### FAME AS A POET

has been for the most part provincial, although his writings have been frequently quoted by the press in all parts of the world. His verse exhibits unmistakable signs of genius, and in all his poetry there is a decided literary quality which is surprising when one remembers that his surroundings were anything but encouraging to study. There is a gracefulness of expression and a musical flow in the language which rather indicate the educated and well-read man than the wearied self-taught artizan. The prominent features of his verse are the wonderful powers of expression, the freshness of his pictures, the harmony in the lines, and the general beauty of his compositions. There is about his work nothing overdrawn; his pictures are given in clear and simple language, so that even the dullest may understand. And yet the verse loses nothing; it is not rhythmic prose; it is true poetry.

For facile and musical flow of language could anything be finer than the following lines from

#### “THE MAID OF A MOUNTAIN LAND”

—by no means reckoned as his best poem.

I met with a joyous few last night,  
Gathered around the taper's light.  
Warm hearts were glad and bright eyes  
shone,  
Kind words were spoken in friendship's  
tone;  
Calm truth fell pure from every tongue,  
And voices awoke in the spell of song;  
And one was there of that social band—  
The dark-eyed Maid of a Mountain Land.

A smile of delight from all went round,  
 As she turned to the casket of sleeping  
 sound;  
 On the tremulous keys her fingers fell,  
 As rain-drops fall in a crystal well;  
 Till full on the ear the witchery stole,  
 And melody melted the captive soul:  
 She touched the chords with a skilful hand,--  
 The dark-eyed Maid of a Mountain Land.

Or could one ask for music more majestic  
 than his

“SKETCH AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.”

Dark Kinder! standing on thy whin-clad side,  
 Where storm and solitude and silence dwell,  
 And stern sublimity hath set his throne—  
 I looked upon a region wild and wide;  
 A realm of mountain, forest haunt, and fell,  
 And fertile valleys, beautifully lone,  
 Where fresh and free romantic waters roam,  
 Singing a song of peace by many a cottage  
 home.

• • • •

But Prince was possessed of something more than the mere ability to juggle with words, and string sentences together in the shape of delightful verse. He was a man with a high conception of the duties of a poet; he had great ideas of the functions of poetry. To Prince, the poet was a man endowed by God with the great gift of song in order that the world might be bettered, that through the singing of the poet men might be led from plane to plane, higher and ever higher, from the base to the noble. And despite his many shortcomings it must be set to the credit of John Critchley Prince that wherever his art was concerned he never swerved from that high standard of duty which he himself had set up. He never forgot his mission was to teach, and not to minister to the baser longings of men. His works are a wonder of purity, and from the first page to the last the elevating trend of his teaching is most emphatic and clear.

Prince was an ardent lover of Nature, and it is from his frequent communing with her that most of his best pictures and his greatest lessons are drawn. His whole being was permeated with a deep reverential spirit, and he could never contemplate Nature without being drawn by her to think of "Nature's God." This is shown forcibly in his most ambitious poem—"The Poet's Sabbath," when after a description of Nature's loveliness he exclaims

My heart's religion is an earnest love  
 Of all that's good, and beautiful, and true!—  
 My noblest temple is this sky above—  
 This vast pavilion of unclouded blue:  
 These mountains are my altars, which sub-  
 due  
 My wildest passions in their wildest hours;  
 My hymn is ever many-voiced and new,—  
 From bird and bee, from wind and wave it  
 powers;  
 My incense is the breath of herbs, leaves,  
 fruits, and flowers.

Man cannot stand beneath a loftier dome  
 Than this cerulean canopy of light—  
 The Eternal's vast, immeasurable home,  
 Lovely by day, and wonderful by night!  
 Than this enamelled floor, so greenly bright,  
 A richer pavement man hath never trod:  
 He cannot gaze upon a holier sight  
 Than fleeting cloud, fresh wave, and fruitful  
 sod—  
 Leaves of that Boundless Book, writ by the  
 hand of God!

And the same trait is manifest in his stirring lines on Kinderscout.

Oh! is it not religion to admire—  
 O God! what thou hast made in field and  
 bower,  
 And solitudes from man and strife apart—  
 To feel within the soul the awakening fire  
 Of pure and chastened pleasure, and the power  
 Of natural beauty on the tranquil heart;  
 And then to think that our terrestrial home  
 Is but a shadow still of that which is to  
 come

But Nature to Prince was not only a source of perpetual delight, a means of leading to a due reverence of the Almighty; she was also a teacher of great lessons, a reminder of man's great destiny. It is an inference pregnant with deep meaning that he draws from his confession of his love for Nature in his

“EPISTLE TO A BROTHER POET.”

My religion is Love,—’tis the noblest and purest;  
 And my temple the Universe—widest and surest;  
 I worship my God through his works, which are fair,  
 And the joy of my thoughts is perpetual prayer.  
 I awake to new life with the coming of Spring,  
 When the lark is aloft with a fetterless wing;  
 When the thorn and the woodbine are bursting with buds,  
 And the throstle is heard in the depth of the woods;  
 When the verdure grows bright where the rivulets run,  
 And the primrose and daisy look up at the sun;  
 When the iris of April expands o'er the plain,  
 And a blessing comes down in the drops of the rain;  
 When the skies are as pure, and the breezes as mild,  
 As the smile of my wife, and the kiss of my child.

There's a harvest of knowledge in all that I see,  
 For a stone or a leaf is a treasure to me:  
 There's the magic of music in every sound,  
 And the aspect of beauty encircles me round;  
 Whilst the fast-gushing joy that I fancy and feel,  
 Is more than the language of song can reveal.  
 Did God set his fountains of light in the skies,  
 That man should look up with the tears in his eyes?  
 Did God make this earth so abundant and fair,  
 That Man should look down with a groan of despair?

Did God fill the world with harmonious life,  
 That man should go forth with destruction  
     and strife?  
 Did God scatter freedom o'er mountain and  
     wave,  
 That Man should exist as a tyrant and slave?  
 Away with so hopeless—so joyless a creed,  
 For the soul that believes it is darkened in-  
     deed!

One of Prince's most laudable features is the use he makes of his poetic powers as a factor towards Social Reform. He was no mere bard of sentiment, a writer content to break into rhapsodies over the beauties of the earth, the sea, the sky, to sing of love, or the glories of the life beyond the grave. He understood the miseries of the present life too well; he knew that life on earth was little better than slavery—than hell—for millions of the poor; he saw where the social evil lay, and bringing to bear the whole artillery of his God-given muse, he sought to "right the wrong." He felt that life even for the poor might be made happier, brighter, and worth the living; and he devoted some of the best of his genius towards that end. It must not be forgotten that the sufferings of the masses of the people in his time were most acute. His early life was spent in an epoch of trouble, turmoil, and want, when the labouring classes were suffering from the bad state of trade, the unjust laws, poor wages, and dear food. In some of the years wholesale poverty prevailed. To the remedy of this condition of things Prince devoted his muse. Firmly bent upon securing the people's rights he calls fearlessly upon the men of wealth, of privilege, and power to remember their duties. And he does not forget to call upon God in the name of the people for justice. It would be difficult to imagine a more moving prayer than that in which he sets forth the sufferings of the masses, and

exposes the evils of the social system of his day—evils which, alas, are still the curse of our land.

Oh! thou Almighty and Beneficent God! Beneath the span of glorious heaven, I kneel Upon thine own fair earth, and ask of thee The boon of truth and liberty for man! Look down, I pray thee, on this groaning land, Where Wrong rides rampant o'er the prostrate form

Of helpless Right,—where crime of every shape Is rife, and that of greater magnitude Allowed to go unpunished;—true it is, That harsh injustice is the chief of all. The flower of social virtue scarcely lives, But droops and saddens 'mid the weeds of vice That grow on every side. Gaunt famine sits Upon the threshold of a thousand homes; The holy bonds of brotherhood are loosed, And Man, a worshipper of Self, lifts up His hand against his neighbour. Every door Of misery and death is opened wide; Madness, and suicide, and murder bring Unnumbered victims to the ready grave; In parish prisons many pine and die, And many on their own cold hearths unseen, Some, bolder than their fellows in distress, Snatch at the means of life, and find their way To lonely dungeons, and are sent afar, From wife and children severed, o'er the seas, Or else, perchance, the gallows is their fate, Which waits to take them from a cruel world.

O God of Mercy, Justice, Love, and Peace! How long must be despair? When wilt thou make

This part of thy creation like the rest? Thy universe is wonderful and vast, And beautiful, and pure—sustained and kept By Thee in perfect harmony for ever! Then why should Man, thine image, still remain

The jarring string of thine eternal harp? Bright Essence of all Good! Oh, deign to give To human hearts a portion of the bliss Which thou hast promised in thy written word!

Give to the nations liberty, and love, And plenty of the fruits of thy fair earth, And charity, and knowledge, and a thirst For Truth's bright fountains, and a trusting hope

To share, at last, thine immortality!

There were few greater lovers of freedom than Prince, and few bards have sung this theme in sweeter tones. But he had no false notions of the meaning of liberty; and the freedom he sought and taught was the freedom not to indulge in idle pleasure, but to live and do right. His grand poem in answer to the question

“WHO ARE THE FREE?”

is full of sublime power:

Who are the free?  
 They who have scorned the tyrant and his rod,  
 And bowed in worship unto none but God;  
 They who have made the conqueror's glory  
     dim,  
 Unchained in soul, though manacled in limb;  
 Unwarped by prejudice, unawed by wrong—  
 Friends to the weak, and fearless of the  
     strong;  
 They who would change not with the chang-  
     ing hour,  
 The self-same men in peril and in power;  
 True to the law of right—as warmly prone  
 To grant another's as maintain their own—  
 Foes of oppression whereso'er it be—  
     These are the proudly free!

Another characteristic of Prince's poetry is the healthy tone which permeates it. Despite his poverty and the gloom of his surroundings, he was no pessimist. On the contrary he breathed the spirit of optimism. He was instilled with hope as to the future of the English toilers, and in the stirring poem

“A CALL TO THE PEOPLE”

he bursts forth into the glorious prophecy—

O God! the future yet shall see  
 On this fair world of thine,  
 The myriads wise, and good, and free,  
     Fulfil thy blest design;  
 The dawn of Truth, long overcast,  
 Shall kindle into day at last,  
     Bright, boundless and divine;  
 And man shall walk the fruitful sod,  
     A being worthy of his God.

For the dawn of that happy time thus foretold, millions of weary mortals are still waiting with anxious yearning. Whether the time will ever come remains to be seen, but it cannot be denied that as a poet John Critchley Prince did his best to bring it nearer, and that the world is all the better for his singing.

In the foregoing extracts Prince has been allowed to tell his own story, to set forth his own aspirations, and to show the high-toned nature of the thoughts which at times took possession of his soul. It will no doubt surprise many who have in mind the besotted condition in which the poet spent much of his time, to find that the object of their scorn could dream such glorious dreams, could picture such noble ideals as the goal at which mortals ought to aim. But the old saying has it that "Genius is akin to madness." And certainly it almost seems as though some powerful demon had at times taken possession of him for the purpose of turning to mockery the lessons that he taught.

The life of Prince is a great enigma—a strange mixture of failure and triumph; and one scarcely knows whether to regard him as an object for blame, pity, wonder, or admiration. Perhaps it is with feelings in which each of the qualities just named are blended that we ought to form our

#### ESTIMATE OF HIS WORTH.

The fact that he too readily yielded to temptation, and made so (apparently) feeble an effort to master his faults is apt to cause us to blame him unduly. That he was ruined by drink there can be no doubt, and one sighs.

with regret to think that in him one of the noblest spirits of his day should have been added to the great total of the victims of intemperance. But he had other foes to fight against—foes quite as strong, quite as pitiless, as the craving for drink—poverty—environment. Indeed it is questionable whether these were not in some measure responsible for his excessive indulgence in liquors. Whatever may be said about all Englishmen having a chance to “get on,” there is no hiding the fact that the poor are sorely and unfairly handicapped in the great race of life. They are held back by inferior education, by hunger, cold, and lack of comfort, by the constant necessity to work, by the gradual extinction of hope,—the dawning knowledge that when they have slaved hard and honestly throughout a lifetime the Workhouse will probably be their portion—by the gloom, the monotony, the crushing nature of their surroundings. And when a man endowed with the genius of Prince, a man in whose breast God has—I had almost said cruelly—planted high aspirations,—yearnings after things he can never gain, circumstances to which he can never attain—small wonder that the soul is crushed by the too heavy burden, and that failure is sometimes the result. Let the man who would condemn Prince remember this—let him call to mind Prince’s own pathetic prayer—only in part answered—

Oh God! my only hope of bliss above!  
 Soul of all being, human and divine!  
 Source of all wisdom! Fountain of all love!  
 Oh, let thy light around my footsteps shine!  
 Oh, teach my stubborn spirit to resign  
 Pride, passion, lust, and every vicious art!  
 Oh, make me truly and securely Thine!  
 Give me a lowly purity of heart,  
 That I may understand and choose the better  
 part!

Let him also listen to the regretful sighing  
of the poet over his own life—over the  
“might have been.”

“I might have been;”—oh, sad suggestive  
words,  
So full of hidden meaning, yet so vain;  
How sadly do they sound on memory’s cords  
And waken feelings of regretful pain!

• • • • •  
Too late to gather up the waste of years,

• • • • •  
Too late to win the humble meed of fame,  
Too late to cast the shadow from my name,  
And turn the world’s hard censure into praise;  
Too late to ask the dear belovèd and lost,  
Forgiveness for stern word and galling deed,  
Uttered and done at such a fearful cost  
That I am bankrupt—and too late to plead;  
But oh, my God; here on my suppliant knee,  
I ask—“Am I too late for mercy and for Thee.

And then let the reader pause and pity—not  
condemn.

It is only just that the bright side of the  
picture should be given also. Prince was not  
all failure. He continued to the end writing  
his pure, high-souled, ennobling lays; and the  
glory of these not even the might of drink or  
poverty could overwhelm. His verse still  
lives—lives even when the story of his failures  
is well-nigh forgotten; and day by day it does  
men good, cheers them in their labour, re-  
vives the weary and heavy-laden, gives  
strength to the weak, and hope to the strong.  
And surely that is triumph. Wherever the  
name of John Critchley Prince is mentioned  
let there be written over against it the facts  
that his works are full of the spirit of Christ,  
and that in them is a lever for the lifting up  
of man.

## XX.

## JOSEPH JOHNSTON, OF HYDE.

A well-known local bard of the middle period of the nineteenth century was Joseph Johnston, who was born at Chester in 1810, removed when very young to Lytham, and settled in Hyde at an early age. He had a tailor's shop in Clarendon Place, Hyde (the shop now occupied by Mr. Andrew, news-agent, and later he kept a shop in the lower part of Market-street, Hyde. Mr. Johnston was a man of fine appearance, with a countenance betokening the possession of great intelligence. At one time he was a class leader, and local preacher of the Hyde Wesleyan body; and was also a leader in the local temperance crusade. In the latter respect, he was a great contrast to Prince, the poet, with whom he was on terms of close friendship. Mr. Johnston was a firm believer in phrenology, which he practised as a hobby. After a time he came under the influence of the late Rev. Alexander Read, Incumbent of St. George's Church, Hyde; and subsequently he attended St. George's Church, and on several occasions published poems commemorative of exceptional or historic events which took place in connection with that sacred building. From an early age he wrote verse, and this found its way into the columns of the local press. After the foundation of the "North Cheshire Herald," he was a frequent contributor to its columns. In 1867 he published in book form a lengthy poem entitled "Oppression, or The Tyranny of Nations," Messrs. Abel Heywood and Sons, of Manchester, being the printers. This book was well received, and John Sidebotham, Esq., J.P., of Kingston

House, and the Rev. Alexander Read, incumbent of St. George's, Hyde, proved substantial patrons of the poet. At the time of his death Mr. Johnston was engaged upon the preparation of a collected edition of his works for publication in book form, and through the kindness of his grandson—Mr. John Bardsley—the manuscript recently came into my hands. The poet died on December 12th, 1868, in the 59th year of his age, and is buried in the graveyard of St. George's Church, Hyde. In 1906, along with James Leigh, the poet, I searched for his grave, and found it to the east of the church, in that part of the burial ground which faces Tower-street. It is almost in a line with that of the poet Prince, which is near the path at the west of the yard. Mr. Johnston left a daughter, now Mrs. Bardsley, of Hyde; and two of his grandsons, Mr. Joe Bardsley, and Mr. John Bardsley, are both well-known in local dramatic circles, both having been prominent members of the old Clarendon Dramatic Society. Mr. Joe Bardsley some years ago adopted the stage as a profession, and has had a successful career as an actor.

Joseph Johnston wrote some pretty lines on the various phases of nature. Here are a few verses

#### ON THE DAISY.

It grows in the meadows, the fields and the lanes,  
And spreads over the mountains, the valleys,  
and plains,  
No spot, how'er rugged, but it can adorn,—  
'Twill dwell with the nettle, the rose, or the thorn.

'Tis the charm of the landscape, so lovely and fair,  
Without it the scene would look barren and bare;  
The rich grassy herbage, so verdantly green,  
Much beauty would lose were the daisy not seen.

An emblem of modesty, neatness and grace,  
Is the bright little daisy, so humble and  
chaste;  
Contented it revels and basks in the sun,  
Or closeth its leaves when the tempest doth  
come.

He was also a man of deep thought, and there was some sound sense in most of what he wrote. In a poem he gives us his views

#### ON FREJUDICE.

“Of all the phases of the mind  
That tend to lead the judgment wrong,  
None more than prejudice combined  
With senseless passion, fierce and strong,  
Obstructs ‘he course of reason’s plan,  
That guides to truth the upright man.

Mr. Johnston’s best effort was his long poem on “The Tyranny of Nations,”—an ambitious piece dealing with such lofty subjects as — “The fall of Poland,” “The despotism of Russia,” “Prussia, the tyranny and cruelty of her Kings,”—“England, her greatness and her sin.” The following lines, taken from it, will give a fair idea of the style and character of this poem:

“Not on science, philosophy, or fame,  
Hath Britain bas’d her great illustrious name;  
Who builds on man, by man shall surely fall,  
That nation lives that owns a God in all.  
Great knowledge tends to raise a nation’s  
sway,  
Still to endure she must God’s truth obey.

What was perhaps intended by the poet as a satire on the mad worship of wealth even by Christian nations is his poem entitled—

#### A L M I G H T Y G O L D.

##### A SOLILOQUY.

Most mighty gold! all potent still to please,  
Oh, could I woo thee, to my longing heart,  
How would my anxious spirit feel at ease,  
With thee to dwell, and never more to part;  
All fear of want would then be far away—  
And happy be each bright or cloudy day.

Besides, the fame ! I should by wealth obtain—  
 Admir'd by all—no matter how 'tis won,  
 If once the shining hoard—I do but gain,  
 If just, 'tis well, if not, 'tis all as one,—  
 The fault would scarce be seen, for charming  
 gold

Would all my sins to wondrous virtues mould.  
 The talk of virtue, holiness and sense,  
 Of justice, conscience, and such childish stuff,  
 What are they worth, if I be short of pence ;  
 Of what avail with bailiffs, stern, and gruff ;  
 Possess'd of cash, I gain the smile of all !  
 A saint at church, no matter what at ball.

Then give me wealth, nought else is worth a  
 thought,  
 'Twill pleasure, power, all earthly good be-  
 stow !

Except virtue, it hath all things bought,  
 But that is not so worshipp'd here below—  
 'Tis true, the love of gold leads down to hell,  
 But that we'll chance, my betters do as well.  
 'Tis this at death will all my wants supply,  
 To give me ease upon the bed of pain,  
 For man needs comfort when he comes to die,  
 And money, money, this can all things gain—  
 And when I'm laid beneath the marble bust ;  
 Though knave I've been—'twill write me wise  
 and just.

But if I'm poor, and wanting worldly store !  
 Though blest by heaven with every needful  
 grace,  
 The rich, the great, the Saint—will shun my  
 door,  
 And scorn me, for my poverty so base ;  
 Then give me riches ! coffers brimming full !  
 Nought else I need, however thick my skull.

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## XXI.

### WILLIAM BEDFORD, OF HYDE AND ASHTON.

William Bedford was a working-man poet, who in his day played no mean part in securing political reform in and about Hyde, Stockport, and Ashton-under-Lyne, with all of which towns he was connected. His career was strangely varied, and was on the whole a sad one. Born in January, 1811, he was the eldest of a family of 12 sons and two daugh-

ters of Matthew Bedford. The father, Matthew, who was a Yorkshireman, came to Hyde to work at John Howard's Mill, and having settled here he joined the Wesleyan Methodists, and became a class leader in that body. William Bedford also attended the Wesleyan Sunday School at Hyde, and received the bulk of his education there. He first worked as a piecer, and afterwards as a spinner at John Howard's Mill, Hyde, and whilst still a youth took a very active part in the agitations for the amelioration of the condition of the working classes, being present at most of the meetings of the operatives held during the thirties and forties. In 1828, along with his father, he was present at the fatal meeting held in the Norfolk Arms, Hyde—known to history as May's Downfall. This meeting, which was called to discuss the grievances of the workers, had disastrous results, for during its progress the flooring of the room gave way, and the hundreds of occupants were precipitated into the rooms and the cellars beneath. Lives were lost, but William Bedford and his father both escaped. After this the Bedfords moved to Stockport, and for a time they also resided near Ashton. William Bedford not only wrote verse, but he was prominent as a writer on behalf of the reform movement, under the nom-de-plume of "Sam Shuttletip." Among his compositions were papers on "Good Government," "The Sorrows of English Working-men," "Communism," etc.

About the year 1849 he emigrated to America, where he was fairly successful for a time, but he startled the world by suddenly committing suicide in 1861. The circumstances of his death were peculiar. He first wrote out a note stating his intention of poisoning himself. Then he went a walk near the Hudson

River, and there took a large dose of laudanum. As the poison did not kill him immediately, he wrote out at intervals an account of the sensations he experienced whilst dying, and this remarkable letter was afterwards found with his body lying in the woods. Portions of the letter are here given:—

August 10, 1861.

I have just swallowed the laudanum in a small quantity of brandy; do not feel much effect from it yet, except a bitterness in my mouth and throat, and a little trembling in my hands. . . . 15 minutes' since I took the laudanum; the effects feel exhilarating, like those of intoxicating drinks. No pain, and the scenery of the Hudson River . . . grand and glorious, my heart aches, and my eyes weep for my friends and children, especially for my boys James and Thomas, but I hope they will not grieve much at my lot, and that they will try to be good boys. . . . Quarter of an hour later, I feel a bitterness and dryness in my throat, and a tendency to lay down and go to sleep, but I shall resist it as long as I can, . . . quarter later, I am trying to read a paper called the "Phunny Fellow," but my ideas begin to get confused, as they have done many a time before, when I have fallen asleep reading. . . . Two hours since I took the dose, I feel more confused in mind every minute, . . . but it don't feel unpleasant.—It must be a quarter of an hour later, and I had just fallen to sleep, and have waked again, . . . I have tried walking about, but it is no use,—cannot keep awake, and feel a trembling all over. . . . Cannot calculate the time, think it must be three hours since I took it. Feel a little inclined to vomit, but hope I shall not do so, have walked about a little, and the sickness is nearly gone away, but my limbs tremble considerably—I have lain down awhile—don't know how long—and have dreamed as usual about the dear friends at home; very sleepy indeed, and my mouth and throat dry—end."

The following poem gives a good idea of Bedford's qualities as a poet. He was undoubtedly a highly gifted man, and his sad end is to be deplored.

## A WOODLAND GRAVE.

Oh, bury me not in a churchyard grave,  
 But down in some woodland dell!  
 And over my head let the wild flowers wave,  
 The flowers I love so well.  
 Let the primrose pale that scents the gale,  
 And the daisy there be found!  
 Let the harebell blue, and the violet, too,  
 And the campion blossom round.

Oh, bury me by some runlet's side,  
 O'er which the woodbine throws  
 Its graceful arms to clasp its bride—  
 The bonny, blushing rose.  
 Let my grave be made, 'neath some oak tree's  
 shade,  
 Some tree both old and gray,  
 Whose stem is bound with ivy round,  
 To cover its decay.

There lay me down at close of day,  
 When the flowers their petals fold,  
 And the setting sun's last glorious ray  
 Doth bathe the earth in gold.  
 Shed not a tear upon my bier,  
 No rite perform for me;  
 Let the song of the thrush in the hazel bush  
 My funeral service be.

And, oh, let never a stone be placed  
 To mark where I am laid;  
 But with nature's green let my bed be graced,  
 In nature's garb arrayed.  
 Then bury me not in that tainted spot,  
 Where the dead lie heaped around;  
 But give me, I crave, a woodland grave,  
 Where sweet wild flowers abound.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE.

I desire to acknowledge the courtesy of  
 Messrs. J. Andrew and Co., Publishers, of  
 Ashton-under-Lyne, and Proprietors of the  
 "Ashton Reporter," to whom I am indebted  
 for their kind permission to use the letter  
 and poem by William Bedford, quoted above;  
 both examples of his work having originally  
 appeared in a notice of Bedford's life in that  
 excellent History of Ashton-under-Lyne, of  
 which Messrs. Andrew were the printers and  
 publishers.

## XXII.

ISAAC RICHARDSON.

## THE BARD OF HOOLEY HILL.

It is sad to think that while the work of some of our local poets continues to give joy and pleasure to generation after generation of readers, the man who penned the poems is too often completely forgotten. One of my earliest recollections is of an old man who recited a dialect poem entitled "Foire Potthur Loan." the work of Isaac Richardson,—but although the poem was and is a great favourite in the towns bordering on the River Tame, it was years before I was able to obtain any reliable information about the writer. The biographical particulars given here have been chiefly supplied by my friend Mr. Sam Hill,—the Bard of Stalybridge,—a gentleman who has written several valuable works upon the poets and poetry of Lancashire. The late Mr. Samuel Hadfield—the historian of Haughton—who was a friend of Richardson, also gave me some details, and presented me with several of the original sheets of Richardson's work.

The author of "Foire Potthur Loan" was born on March 10th, 1817, at Ardwick, and was the youngest of a large family. By trade he was a block-printer, and at various times worked at Shepley Printworks, and at the Sandy Vale Works, Dukinfield. For the greater part of his life he lived at Hooley Hill. In 1845 he published a small book of Poems, which contained some pieces of rare merit. Afterwards he published single poems in sheet form, and these at one time were very popular. He died on June 15th, 1860, and was buried in St. Peter's Churchyard, Ashton-under-Lyne.

Richardson could write well in ordinary English. Here is a specimen of his work in this style:—

L I F E.

Life! human life! what can it be?  
 A preface to eternity!  
 A flash, a vivid meteor glare,  
 A vapour floating in the air.  
 As springs up the forest flower,  
 Soon man's short race is run;  
 The frosts of age, the storms that rage  
 And life's dim setting sun,  
 Proclaim with one accord, and why,  
 That man, frail man, is born to die.  
 Then, since all nature joins to prove  
 That life is but a breath,  
 Let us secure that bliss above  
 And hail the mandate—Death.

But Richardson's "immortal" work is his fine and humorous dialect poem already referred to, which is here given in full:—

FOIRE POTTHUR LOAN.

Wonst on o toime thur wur o' mon—  
 Un so thur has bin mony o' one—  
 Bur what aum beawn fort tell yo neaw,  
 Is weer obeawt he lift, un heaw.  
 Beginniin, then, i'th' gradely road,  
 Aud betthur tell what he wur coad:  
 His woife hoo aulus coad him Joan—  
 They lift i'th' Foire Potthur Loan!

Well, if yo' dunna know weer that is,  
 Au'll tell yo' o' obeawt it gratis;  
 For aum as librul us o' doctor,  
 O' parson, 'torney, or a proctor,  
 Un con oford fort' squander knowledge  
 Us chep as thoose whot come fro' t' college:  
 Then, to my readers, be it known,  
 Ut this same Foire Potthur Loan,

Is ut seawth eend ov Hooley Hill—  
 It wur—au guess it is so still.  
 Au should loike t' scrat out one o' th' O's,  
 Un mak' it Holy Hill, becose  
 It stonds just on a hilly ridge,  
 Un's nearer heaven, tin Stalybridge;  
 Except that dirty nook, ut's noan  
 By th' name o' Foire Potthur Loan.

Well, in this loan thur lift o mon,  
 But whether Jonys coad, or John,  
 Au cudna tell you for my loife,  
 But there he lift—so did his woife,  
 Just loike two sheep teed in one tether,  
 They eat, and drunk, and wark'd together.  
 For Joan wark'd hard—he wur no drone,  
 Un Joan's woife wark'd us hard us Joan.

Neaw Joan wur swart un steawt o' limb,  
 He loik'd his woife, un hoo loik'd him;  
 Un so they aulus seem'd t' agree,  
 Us happy us wed foke con be.  
 Hoo with her tung could mak a rattle,  
 Un Joan cud feight o dasunt battle;  
 For drinkin ale yo cud find none  
 Loike him i' th' Foire Potthur Loan.

Cbove o bit he loik't it, yet  
 He drunk no moor nor he could get,  
 Un when he'd had a gradely fill  
 Ov ony sort o burgy swill,  
 He'd lie him c'awn un snore away,  
 Just like o pig, for hawve o day;  
 Quite cozy-like, thur cud be noan  
 I'e happier ignorance nor Joan.

Un when, ut last, he wack'nd up,  
 Fust thing he'd ax for summut t' sup;  
 Un if he cudna get it then,  
 He'd swear (by gosh) loike twenty men.  
 This made things awkurd for his woife,  
 Un causd, sometoimes, o bit o stroife,  
 Till th' women o' cried shawm o Joan,  
 Ut lift i'th' Foire Potthur Loan.

They sed his woife's case wur o sad un,  
 Un Joan he wur o nasty bad un!  
 Un every one declared that hoo  
 Wud never live wi' sich o foo;  
 They wudna sleep wi' sitch o arrant  
 Rascal—they'd tak him wi' o warrant.  
 Hoo said, goo woam un mind your own—  
 Thurs wus i'th' Foire Potthur Loan.

So woam they went—they met that neet,  
 Un o ogreed it sarved hur reet.  
 Well, Joan wur drinkin, till one day  
 He'd noather strap, nor brass for t' pay,—  
 Un lonlords, when yur brass is done,  
 I'e fillin ale, con see no fun;  
 So when he fun he cud get noan,  
 He went to th' Foire Potthur Loan,

Intendin' foit' kick up a bother,  
 Un get some brass, one road or th' t'other.  
 What winna chaps do, dun yo think  
 (Fort' get it), when they loiken drink.  
 O thought coom in his yed while goin,  
 For he, o th' road, wur mischief brewin;  
 He thowt he'd fear his woife, yo known,—  
 Neaw that wur sadly rung o Joan.

He axt for brass, un that wur rung,  
 Ustdid o brass, hoo gan him tung;  
 Un then, wi' words au darna menshun,  
 He swore that it wur his intention  
 Fort' cut his throat, i' hauve o minnet,  
 Un railey he look'd sarious in it:  
 He strap'd his razzor on th' slopstone,  
 For't dee i'th' Foire Potthur Loan!

His woife, hoo thowt it wur o sham,  
 So hoo began o makin gam;  
 Un laft, un swat—her fat sides shakin,  
 For hoo that day had th'oон wot—bakin.  
 Neaw when Joan seed this wudna fit,  
 It botheret him obove o bit;  
 He vow'd that day, wi' monny o groan,  
 He'd dee i'th' Foire Potthur Loan!

He swore, "Awm oather mad or crazy,"  
 "Nay, mon," hoo sed, "thewart nobber  
 lazy!"  
 "Well, bur au am determint' dee,  
 Un theaw shall cut my throat!" said he.  
 "Aye; land me howd o'th' razzor, lad."  
 He gant her, un wur very glad;  
 Becose he surely thowt, yo noan,  
 Hoo'd wizz it ewt o'th' dur i'th' loan.

Thur wur o brocken pipe on th'oон—  
 Hoo'd mischief in her noddle soon;—  
 Neaw hearken—'twur o woman's trick—  
 It winna may yo faint, nur sick:  
 Hoo geet this 'bacco-pipe, unseen,  
 Un sed, Neaw, Joan, lad, shut thy een!"  
 It wur red whot, un so unknown,  
 Hoo draw'd it o'er th' windpipe o Joan!

Then up he jumps, un us he stands,  
 He gawms his throat wi' boooth his honds;  
 Un gasps, un stares, un shakes his yed:  
 Un then, ut last, he tremblin sed,—  
 "Awm gooin, now, us cowd us lead,  
 I'e toothrey minnits aust be deod."  
 He cried, "Thy heart's us hard us stone,  
 Wus tin a boother eawt o'th' lone:

Au didna think aud had o woife  
 Ut cud o tain oway my loife!"—  
 "Theaw leatheredyd," hoo said, "dost rue it?  
 Weh, whot a foo fort' tell me t' do it:  
 Au nobber did, theau knows, us't towd me."  
 "Au'm cruttln deawn," he sed, oh! howd  
 me!"  
 He didna dee that toime, for Joan  
 Lift yerrs i'th' Foire Potthur Loan!

#### MORAL.

Let oitch mon larn, what reads this tale,  
 For t' mind his wark, un keep off ale;  
 Un yo ut han good woives, un know it,  
 Us th' little brid sed, "Love un show it!"  
 Dunna purtend for t' tay yoar loives'  
 For t' feer some brass eawt o' yoar woives:  
 Yo may get feurt yoarsels, yo known,  
 Loike him i'th' Foire Potthur Loan!

Foire Potthur Loan is now better known by the name of Little Lane; the proper designation, however, is Kilshaw Lane, which is derived from the Hall situate at the south end, and which is said to have been built about the time that Cromwell turned out the long Parliament.

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#### XXIII

#### J A M E S      D R I V E R.

This rhymester was a well-known character in Hyde in the middle of the nineteenth century. He was a cotton operative, and it is said by some that he was at one time a carrier. His poems—or more properly rhymes—were issued in sheet form, and sold by him up and down the neighbourhood. I have not been able to obtain a copy of any of his productions, but the following lines were repeated to me by the late Robert Higham, Esq., J.P. (Editor of the "North Cheshire Herald"), who, when working as a compositor for Mr. George Booth, printer, had the task of 'setting'

Driver's compositions in type. The lines formed part of a poem on

#### A WALKING STICK.

"How useful is my walking stick  
To gauge the dirt when it is thick,  
To find the depth on either side,  
That I may know the way to stride.

"It is a weapon in my hand,  
When I do walk, or run, or stand,  
With it the battle I have won,  
And made the barking dogs to run.  
On it I lean just at my will,  
When I walk up or down a hill,  
My walking stick.

James Driver died in the middle of the nineteenth century, leaving a family of several children. One of these, named Richard, was also a well-known Hyde rhymester.

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#### XXIV.

#### HORACE JACKSON.

Horace Jackson was a saddler who at one time had a shop in Clarendon Place, Hyde; and also carried on business in Denton. In 1853 he published a collection of verses in book form under the title of "Stray Thoughts a Collection of Miscellaneous Poems, by Horace Jackson." The printer was Mr. George Booth, of Market-street, Hyde. Jackson appears to have met with very severe criticism, for in the preface to his book he tells us:

"In apologising for my presumption in submitting to the public these few rambling effusions of my fitful pen, I wish to plead in extenuation, that had I not been rather severely discussed for a previous stray specimen of my timid muse, and also denounced a plagiarist, I had never ventured to appear in print." . . . "I acknowledge I see no importance or service in a literary view, in this 'hmying affair of mine. I have merely vindicated assailed

honour. I lay claim to no superior merit, and should it meet only a pleasant toleration, I am amply rewarded. Merit, indeed, could scarcely be expected from one neither trained by others, or enjoying leisure to school himself."

The following examples of Jackson's work are taken from this little book—

### A SABBATH WALK

Here for awhile then seated let us stay,  
And yon extensive glorious scene survey.  
The far-extending prospects spreading wide,  
Where yon meandering rivers smoothly  
glide;  
And baby nymphs from many a distant hill  
In wanton play from out their rippling rill.  
Babbling along in muffled faces they  
O'er pebbly beds in rippling currents stray;  
Sedater join their parents' hoarser song,  
Murmuring, glide majestically along.

### MORN IN JUNE.

When Nature in full beauty smiles,  
When summer yields her golden store,  
When Ceres breathes 'mid scenting coils,  
"And "wit-wit" echoes from the mower.  
When faintly spires Aurora's horn,  
The centre beam that decks her brow,  
And smiling through the teary corn,  
Gleams in the west with sparkling glow.  
When o'er the east on tip-toes peeps,  
And blushing, half reveals her charms,  
And sipping from the western steeps,  
Those exhalating trembling gems.  
'Tis then we first perceive her glow,  
But see her every charm revealed—  
See nature every smile bestow,  
And day's glance dazzle from each leafy  
shield.

In a postscript to his book Jackson writes—

"As Poet, I know, I must rank rather low,  
As Saddler command some respect;  
But take me as Poet and Saddler, too,  
As good as you well can expect.

Horace Jackson appears to have come in for rather more than an average amount of criticism. His poetry, of course, was not to be compared to that of John Critchley Prince, and

some of the most spiteful of his critics did not hesitate to let him know that they looked upon the publication of his verse as an impertinence. Some of the most scathing of his denunciators did not stop at ordinary methods, for they inserted the following advertisement in the columns of the "Hyde Gazette and Monthly Advertiser" for November, 1853.

"Tis pleasant sure to see one's name in print,  
A book's a book, although there's nothing in't."

"Last, a few days' ago, the "STRAY THOUGHTS" of a Denton Poet and Hyde Saddler." Whosoever has found the same, on restoring them to their owner, shall be rewarded with an a-cross-stick.

But the critics are often spiteful, and after all Jackson only suffered the same merciless and undeserved abuse which has been freely bestowed upon the greatest men of the age. He was one in whose soul the fires of poetry burned, and he gave forth his humble songs to the best of that ability with which God had endowed him. He departed from this life at Hyde, on December 20th, 1878.

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## XXV.

### THOMAS BARDSTLEY, THE MOTTRAM BARD.

The author, according to Chadwick, was the son of John Bardsley, of Mottram, and was born in a cottage near the "Star Inn," Mottram. He was stationmaster at Mottram when the M.S. and L. railway was first opened, but afterwards removed to Hawkshead, near Kendal, where he acted as village schoolmaster. He first published, in 1831, a little work entitled "Mottram—a Poem by a native of the Place."—Printed by Thomas

Cunningham, Ashton-under-Lyne, 1831. In 1853 he published "My Native Village, and other Poems." The following lines are taken from his poem on

"M O T T R A M."

"Sweet Muse, assist me whilst in feeble lays  
My native village I attempt to praise,  
May every blessing bounteous Heaven can give  
Be richly poured on them that in it live;  
May smiling Spring, with verdure deck each  
field,  
And every opening scene fresh pleasure yield;  
May summer's gentlest, purest breezes blow,  
And health and peace to every cottage flow;  
May yellow autumn, rich with fruit and corn,  
Its lovely hills in beauty still adorn;  
When stormy winds arise, in winter wild,  
May God protect each poor and helpless  
child."

The poet then enters into a description of Mottram, past and present. Whilst dwelling upon Mottram Church, he says:—

"Here lies mouldering, free from care and strife,  
OLD ROE, the ancient warrior, and his wife;  
In byegone days, removed from her afar,  
To aid his monarch in the Holy War;  
His happy home, and his dear partner kind,  
With many a deep regret he left behind;  
And of this ancient warrior bold  
Among the rustics many a tale is told."

The byegone musical celebrities of Mottram are also noticed.

"Of those players, now, alas, how few,  
For they have vanished like the morning dew;  
Yes, OLDHAM JOHN, and Will his younger  
brother,

Alas, we now have neither one nor th' other;  
Their dulcet strains no more will charm the  
ear,

Or sweet harmonious sounds provoke a tear.  
No more in yonder cottage must they play  
Sweet music on the rustic's wedding day,  
No more must William at the midnight hour  
Sweet sounds into the throbbing bosom pour,  
No more poor John will play his tuneful part,  
Or cause a thrill through every feeling heart,  
Their music then the heart did merry make,  
And cause the lame to dance at Mottram  
Wake."

## XXVI.

## JOHN HORATIO WAGSTAFFE.

The subject of the present sketch, who is one of the literary worthies of Hyde, thus quaintly outlines the story of his life—"I was born," says he—"in Stockport, on October 4th, 1820; my father being Samuel Wagstaffe, shoemaker, of Stockport, and my mother a daughter of Wm. Clegg, the 'Stay-maker Poet' of Stockport. On the 6th of February, 1830, my father took an old cottage opposite the Crown Inn in Hyde Lane—there he put up his sign, and got a good number of customers. Captain Clarke's family, the Sidebothams, the Chorltons, and other good people sent their boots and shoes to him to be mended, and thus handsomely helped him along. In 1836 Mr. James Beech took down the cottages opposite the Crown Inn, and built some shops upon the site, whereupon my father went lower down on the same side of Hyde Lane. I commenced to learn my father's trade in 1834, and early in 1846 I got married. I had several children, but all died in early life. In the spring of 1866 Messrs. J. and E. Smith took me to be assistant in their boot shop; and in 1873 I became shopman to Mr. Z. B. Smith, Boot and Shoe Maker, Market-street, Hyde. I remained with him the rest of his life. He died in 1892. In 1868—my first wife having died—I married a second time, and my wife and I are still living in Deal Square, Hyde—October, 1906."

Mr. Wagstaffe published a prose essay on "A Few Observations and Notes upon the late Hyde Hall, Hyde," in 1877, and another entitled "Hyde in the Olden Times" in 1878. In 1881, he and his brother Alfred wrote a third pamphlet on the history of St. George's

Church, Hyde, and its peal of bells. The last-named publication contained a poem on the bells. Mr Wagstaffe's poetical compositions comprise verses on the following subjects—“Keflection,” “Werneth Low,” “The Stars,” “Winter Night,” “England is our Home,” “The Moon,” etc., etc. The appended verses are from his pen:—

#### WINTER NIGHT.

The glorious orb of day departs—  
He leaves the glowing crimson'd sky:  
The splen·lid scene to us imparts  
How fast the evening shades draw nigh.

Sweet sunne's beauties all have fled;  
No woodland music charms our ear,  
The trees' rich foliage—gone or dead—  
Cold winter soor may prov⁹ severe.

The shades prevail—this pall of night  
Conceals sweet Nature all around:  
Will darkness last till morning light?  
And no relief or change be found?

See, in the east yon radia it glow  
Proclaims the welcome rising moon,  
Which will the skies illumine so  
That midnight may be light as noon.

Ascend, bright Luna, night's fair queen;  
Cheer all lone travellers on their way:  
Diffuse thy light the hills between,  
And make the night like welcome day.

Shine, moon and stars, in glory shine,  
Ye guardians of the silent night;  
Show forth to man the Power Divine,  
That formed you all, and made you bright.

Mr. Wagstaffe's personal appearance is striking. He is a man of ve, y small stature, but sturdy build, with a fine head, and face cf keen intelligence.



## XXVII.

R E V. J. A. P A G E, M.A.,  
VICAR OF TINTWISTLE.

The Rev. James Augustus Page, M.A., who for 27 years was Vicar of the bleak parish of Tintwistle, was first educated at Boteler's Free Grammar School, Warrington; then went to Trinity College, Dublin, where he won the Vice-Chancellor's Prize for English poetry in 1844; became B.A. in 1845, and M.A. in 1865; was ordained deacon by Dr. John Graham, Bishop of Chester in 1845, and Priest in 1846. His first curacy was at Lymn in 1846, but in 1847 we find him settled at Tintwistle as Vicar, and here he remained until 1873. As a clergyman he was a great success; he worked hard to relieve the distress at the time of the Cotton Famine; and was most efficient in conducting the ordinary agencies of his parish. His first wife, who died in 1866, built St. Mary's Church, Hollingworth, from a fund raised by shilling subscriptions which she had collected. Mr. Page married again in 1871, and by his second wife had one son and two daughters. He was a fine preacher, and lectured up and down the country on behalf of the Protestant party, of which he was a loyal supporter, and also on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Mr. Page had been appointed District Secretary of the Bible Society in 1852, and in 1873 he left Tintwistle (resigning the living in March, 1873), and removed to Anson Terrace, Rusholme, Manchester, in order that he might more thoroughly carry on his Bible Society work.

Always fond of poetry, he published, even while in his teens, a volume of Poems entitled

“Scattered Leaves.” The author is described on the title page as a scholar at Boteler’s Free Grammar School. The book consists of 100 pages of short poems.

In 1850 Mr. Page published a small booklet entitled “The Spirit of Protestantism,” containing 52 pages of short poems. In this book appeared what is perhaps his most widely known effusion—

“WHAT! LEAVE MY CHURCH OF  
ENGLAND!”

What! leave my Church of England,  
My father’s and my own!  
What! act the viper, sting the breast  
Whereon my strength has grown!  
Oh! bid me leave all else on earth,  
The near and dear I’ve known,  
But not my Church of England,  
My father’s and my own.

My good old Church of England:—  
I love her ancient name;  
And God forbid this heart should feel  
One throb to do her shame;  
A mother she has been to me,  
Hath shown a mother’s care—  
Oh! shall I spurn a parent’s arms—  
And quit my birthright there?  
My dear old Church of England,  
I’ve heard the tale of blood;  
Of hearts that loved her to the death,  
The great, the wise, the good;  
The “Faith delivered once” they kept,  
They burned, they bled, they died—  
And shall their children’s children now  
Be traitors at her side.

My own dear Church of England:—  
The blood hath not run cold,  
That coursed like streams of liquid fire  
In martyr’s veins of old;  
The cruel blaze their vitals fed,  
Hath lit another flame,  
That warms the tide in every heart  
Of those who love her name.  
I love my Church of England,  
For she doth love my Lord—  
She speaks not, breathes not, teaches not,  
But from His written word;  
Her voice is like my Saviour’s voice,  
Compassionate and kind;  
She echoes all his precepts pure,  
She tells me all his mind.

In 1852 Mr. Page published a larger collection of "Protestant Ballads." This handsome volume is dedicated to "That great champion of Protestantism, the Rev. Hugh M'Neile, D.D., Canon of Chester," . . . by "his fellow-labourer in the gospel of our Common Lord and Master." In the preface the author states that he is "more ambitious of being considered a good Protestant than a good Poet," and "he is utterly callous to all criticism as to poetic merit." The book contains some fine pieces, and rousing battle songs. Here is a fragment from

"THE SIEGE OF DERRY."

"They have swarmed from the south,  
They have poured from the west,

They have banded together

Their bravest and best:

And they vow by the Virgin,

By Peter, and Paul,

That our own little Derry

Must open or fall.

But the hearts of our Derry

Are faithful and brave,

And they've hands that can only

Be chained by the grave!

And they vow by their children,

Their wives and their all,

That our own little Derry

Shall conquer or fall.

And they've been on their knees

To the Lord of the host,

They have ranged every man

At his perilous post;

And they answer the foe,

Like a storm from afar,

With William for ever,"

And "Derry-go-bragh."

The book also contains the poem which won the Vice-Chancellor's Prize in Trinity College, Dublin, in 1844.

Mr. Page was one of those who loved laborious days, and his zeal for work caused his death. He died at Rusholme, on March

25th, 1880, in his 59th year; and his decease caused a profound sensation in the parish of Tintwistle. He was laid at rest by the side of his first wife in Tintwistle Churchyard, and the funeral was attended by great crowds of people. On the Sunday following, special funeral sermons were preached in Tintwistle Church. Three years later, his second wife followed him to the grave. Quite recently I sought their resting-place, and found it near the path and the gate through which the dead husband and his wives must have passed often during their time at Tintwistle. It is an ideal resting-place, within sight of the everlasting hills. Above it is a stone with an inscription; at the foot of it the words—‘They rest from their labours’; and lower still the final words “Gone Home.”

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## XXVIII.

### SAMUEL LAYCOCK.

Samuel Laycock, one of the best known of “Lancashire” poets and dialect writers, was born at Marsden, near Huddersfield, on January 17th, 1826; and being the son of a hand-loom weaver in poor circumstances, was compelled to begin work in a woollen mill at the age of nine years. When he was eleven years of age his parents removed to Stalybridge, and here he became a weaver in a cotton mill. For a time he lived in Dukinfield. In 1862 the ‘Cotton Panic’ caused him to be thrown out of employment, and later he became librarian at the Mechanics’ Institution, Stalybridge. In 1868 he settled in Blackpool, where he carried on business as a photographer. He died on the 15th of December, 1893.

Many of his earliest writings were first published at the "Herald" Office, Hyde. The late Mr. Robert Higham (Editor of the "North Cheshire Herald"), wrote:—"I had a good deal to do with him at that time—more especially during the cotton panic, when he wrote some of his best sketches of Lancashire life. I remember with what pleasure he brought to me that still popular poem—"Welcome, little bonny brid," and the still further pleasure he had to find it sell rapidly. Most of his earlier lyrics I set up in type with my own hands, and for several years was on terms of considerable intimacy with Mr. Laycock. . . . All his printing was at that time done at the 'North Cheshire Herald' Office, Hyde (as indeed were the poems of John Critchley Prince.) . . . . Mr. Laycock's printing orders were not large, 500 and 1,000 of each of his poems being the regular run. The following is the account for a month:—1,000 "Bowton's Yard," 1,000 "A Respectable Mon," 1,000 "Eawr Jim," 1,000 "Mi Gronfathur," 1,000 "Welcome, Bonny Brid," 1,000 "Billy Fatcake," 1,000 "Daisy Nook," 1,000 "Oh, this boil," 1,000 "Owd Fogey," 1,000 "Foot passengers keep to the Right," 1,000 "Quack Doctor," 1,000 "Little bit o' booath sides," 1,000 "Owd Isaac Bradshaw," 1,000 "Heaw to raise th' wind," 1,000 "Jchn Booth and the Vicar," 500 "God bless 'em," 500 "Dear Old England," 500 "Adam and Mary," 500 "Shurat Weavers." "This was an excellent month's work. A great number were disposed of at the retail figure of one penny each. Mr. Laycock was more careful with his money than John Critchley Prince. Whilst the latter was scarcely ever sober, always short of the wherewithal, and ready to borrow half-a-crown

from a friend, Laycock was a teetotaler, and never overstepped the bounds of propriety and decency. For a considerable time he resided at Cheetham Hill, Dukinfield, and was in the habit of walking over to the "Herald" Office a time or two a week."

Laycock's work is well worth reading, and in any history of Lancashire writers his name must occupy a prominent place. His two pieces, "Thou art welcome, little bonny brid," and "Bowton's Yard," have become immortal, and are worthy to rank with some of the best works of Waugh, Brierley, or any of the other members of that school of dialect writers to which Laycock himself belonged. His best pieces are written in the dialect, but he also cast some beautiful thoughts into ordinary English verse.

What could be more delightful than the four lines from "An Evening Prayer":

"The moon shed forth her silvery light,  
O'er mountain, dale, and ocean;  
And all I saw and heard that night,  
Inspired me with devotion."

Or what more sadly sweet than the lines addressed to a friend who had just suffered the loss of a daughter:—

"The house is gloomy when the blinds are down;  
The groves are silent when the birds have flown,  
And you and I have oft been pained to find  
Our loved one's gone while we are left behind;  
Our turn will come, how soon we cannot say;  
A few more milestones passed in life's rough way;  
A few more acts, and we must make our bow,—  
And other eyes grow dim, as ours do now.

Laycock's first volume of "Lancashire Songs" was published in 1864. In 1875 a larger edition of his poems appeared, and in

1893, shortly before his death, a collection of the best of his life's work was published by Mr. Clegg, of Oldham. This last is a handsome volume, well produced, and bears the title of "Warblin's fro' an owd Songster." It contains some good illustrations, one of the dame's school mentioned in "Bowton's Yard."

At number one, i' Bowton's Yard, mi gronny keeps a skoo,  
But hasn't mony scholars—yet,—hoo's only one or two;  
They sen th' owd woman's rather cross—well-well, it may be so:  
Aw know hoo box'd me rarely once, an' poo'd mi ears an' o.

And another of the old cobbler described in the same poem:—

"At number nine th' owd cobbler lives—th'owd chap at mends mi shoon;  
He's gettin very weak and done, he'll ha to leov us soon;  
He reads his Bible every day, an' sings just loike a lark,  
He says he's practisin' for heaven—he's welly done his wark.

But the man who wishes to read a graphic description of the homely Lancashire folk of old time, should purchase "Warblin's fro' an Owd Songster," and read the poems through again and again.

Mr. Robert Higham, shortly before his death, presented me with several manuscripts and letters written by distinguished local literary men who had published their works at the "North Cheshire Herald" Office, and among them is a letter from Laycock, which, needless to say, I prize very dearly. There is a touch of pathos about it, for it is a reply to a reminder that the poet's printing bill was due, and it shows something of the ups and downs of the poet's life. But the neatly-written note is a literary gem, showing that its writer was thoroughly conscientious, and in the truest sense, was one of nature's noblemen.

## XXIX.

## THOMAS BARLOW,

## THE BARD OF LONGDENDALE.

This poet was born at Radcliffe, in Lancashire, on the 17th of January, 1826, but at an early age removed to Hyde, Cheshire, where he became engaged as a calico printer. Afterwards he removed to Dinting, and the remainder of his life was spent in the neighbourhood of Glossop. He was a poor-law guardian for Glossop, a prominent member of the local Co-operative Societies, and was made one of the first working-men magistrates for the borough of Glossop. On several occasions I was in the company of the Bard of Longendale, and found him an interesting, though somewhat reserved man. A collection of his works under the title of "Barlow's Poems," was published by Messrs. John Heywood and Sons, Manchester, in 1867. It is a volume of 230 pages, consisting of "A Trip to Woodhead," "Scenes Around Castleton," and other poems, and one of the features of the book is the successful way in which the poet describes local scenery. There are many choice gems in his poems on Longendale.

"I know a spot where the swallow flies  
With a swift and arrowy flight,  
Where in spring all day the cuckoo cries,  
And half through the dreamy night.

"A quiet dell in a mountain side,  
Far from the noisy town—  
It lies to the open country wide,  
And the tufted heather brown.

Such is his song on a moorland dell.

Barlow is locally famous for the excellence of some of his "songs." Specimens of two are given here, the last one having been long ago adopted as the special favourite of the Lancashire operative class.

## SONG.

Softly the summer wind sweeps o'er the  
meadows,  
Faint falls the sunlight on turret and tree;  
O'er the fallow lea, linger the shadows,  
Eve is approaching—I wait, love, for thee.

## THE FACTORY GIRL.

Though not possessed of golden store,  
Nor deck'd in jewels rare,  
Sweet Lucy's virtues shine no less,  
Nor is she the less fair.  
Can gold bestow a kindlier heart?  
Can jewels make it rare?  
Ah, no! 'tis something richer far  
Must hold possession there.  
My song is not of titled dame,  
Of nobleman nor earl:  
I sing of one I love to name—  
The modest Factory Girl.  
Though not so queenly beautiful,  
She's fair, yes, passing fair:  
She has a pleasing grace of form,  
And dignity of air;  
And there is that in Lucy's breast  
Which beauty never gives—  
There is a true, a gentle heart,  
Which feels for all that lives.  
I sing not now of titled dame,  
Of nobleman nor earl;  
I sing of one I love to name,  
The modest Factory Girl.  
Too oft your pompous lady fair  
Is fickle, false, and vain,  
Inflicting wounds in other hearts  
Without remorse or pain.  
So 'tis not wealth begets respect,  
As often hath been proved,  
And Lucy in a humble way  
Is known but to be loved.  
I sing not now of titled dame,  
Of nobleman nor earl:  
I sing of one I love to name,  
The modest Factory Girl.  
A low sweet voice and manners true  
In Lucy are combined,  
Which say, although she be but poor  
She's riches in her mind;  
And though her lineage doth not spring  
From nobleman or earl,  
She's honoured—she's respected—as  
A modest Factory Girl.  
I sing no song of titled dame,  
Of nobleman nor earl:  
I sing of one I love to name,  
The modest Factory Girl.

The poem last quoted met with a wonderful reception at the time it was written, and probably from that effort alone its author is destined to lasting fame in the district in which he lived. Mr. Barlow died on the 17th of October, 1904, in the 79th year of his age, and was buried at Mottram.

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## XXX.

## THOMAS HODSON.

Thomas Hodson was born at Mottram-in-Longdendale, on the 5th day of March, 1828, and was educated at the Christian Brethren School, on the high road to Hyde. He worked as a block-printer at the Hodge. In his early manhood he was an enthusiastic politician, and was looked up to as a leader by the workers. His contributions have appeared in the local press at regular intervals since the year 1859, and they evidence the possession on the part of their author of intellectual gifts of no mean order. Mr. Hodson is now an inmate of the Ashton Union. A typical example of his verse is here given:—

## RING THE BELLS.

Ring the bells, on Christmas morn,  
Hark! the angels sing again:  
"Peace, goodwill, a Saviour born,"  
As they sang on Bethlehem's plain  
Ring the bells, the merry Waits  
Now are singing as of yore;  
Open wide your well-barred gates,  
Welcome give to rich and poor.  
Ring the bells o'er hill and dale.  
Let the joyous music float,  
Filling every spreading sail,  
Swelling up from every throat.  
Ring the bells, in every heart  
You will touch a tender spot  
Nursing memories that will start  
Teardrop in the hall or cot.

Ring the bells, the aged sire—  
 See the light shine in his face—  
 Sitting by the Christmas fire,  
 For time's footsteps he can trace.

Ring the bells, the man in rags,  
 With his head and heart depressed,  
 Nimbler treads the dreary flags,  
 Feeling warmer in his breast.

Ring the bells, the maiden trips  
 With a lighter step this morn,  
 Tingling to her finger tips,  
 With the hopes just newly born.

Ring the bells, without a jar,  
 Music to the soldier's ear,  
 Fighting in a land afar  
 For the country he holds dear.

Ring the bells, and do not cease  
 Till the cannon's roar is hushed.

Ring us in a reign of peace,  
 Wrong and vain ambition crushed.

Ring the bells, dull care dismiss,  
 Ring the bells with all your might;  
 Ring a purer earthly bliss,  
 Blended with the coming light.

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## XXXI.

RALPH BERNARD ROBINSON,  
 MOTTRAM POET AND HISTORIAN.

On the shelves of some of the public libraries in the Manchester district there may be found copies of a very scarce, and, I fear, seldom read book, entitled "Longdendale: Historical and descriptive sketches of the two parishes of Mottram and Glossop, by Ralph Bernard Robinson." It is a small volume of 64 pages, was written in 1863, and contains a brief history of the townships of the Longdendale country, and a collection of the traditions and customs of the neighbourhood. A few months after its publication its author issued an addendum pamphlet, which was equally interesting.

Ralph Bernard Robinson, the author of the above-named books, was born at Mottram in 1829, and first won fame as a poet. In 1851 he issued a small volume of poems, with the title of "Woodbines," printed by T. C. Newby, of London, and dedicated to the Rt. Hon. Lord Edward George and Lady Fitzalan Howard. It contained some pretty pieces, but the most notable of its contents were several lengthy ballads on the legends and traditions of Longdendale.

Mr. Robinson's most ambitious piece is his poem on

MELANDRA,

which begins with the verses:—

"Melandra lofty oak crowned hill,  
Overlooking winding Longdendale;  
IIarped to by Edrowe's mystic rill,  
And fanned by every summer gale.

There once the Roman eagles shone  
Refulgent in the summer sky,  
And claimed the land for Caesar's sun,  
The sign of power and victory.

There once again strong walls and tower  
Oerlooked a city on the plain,  
And there against a hostile power,  
A chief did rightful rule maintain.

The wondrous mystery of the past  
Invests Melandra's hill, to me,  
With a romantic charm that's cast  
Around her scenes so fair to see.

And images of ancient day  
Come crowding round at Fancy's call,  
As musing pensively I stray,  
Where whilom was the castle wall.

Gone are the mighty ones of old,  
The castle yard is now green sod,  
Where once the Roman cohort bold,  
And valiant British chieftain trod.

But still the silvery Edrowe sighs  
By old Melandra's vallum green,  
And many voices seem to rise  
'Mid murmur of her wavelets' sheen.

Essay my muse to tune the harp,  
Once played by British bards so well;  
And in sweet Virgil's epic verse  
Melandra's mystic story tell.

Robinson then goes on to relate in the lengthy poem the story of the fight between the rival forces of Melandra Castle and Mouse-low Castle.

Upon the level summit of the hill,  
Behind the Saxon castle, where the moors  
Rose swart and dark in sombre majesty;  
They stopped and rallied round their mighty  
chief,  
And gave the Britons battle for a while,  
And like to one of the barbaric gods  
Of their Valhalla, Almand stood up high  
Upon his stirrups, brandishing his spear,  
And urging on his men with shouts and cries,  
His helm and breastplate catching the bright  
glow  
Of golden sunset, his long flaxen hair  
Streaming and floating wildly in the breeze,  
Till in the hour when fortune seemed to smile,  
Count Lewin's javelin winged him purple  
death,  
And when the Saxons saw their leader slain,  
They cast away their useless arms, and fled.

The poem is full of interest, containing as it does much of the local Arthurian romance.

Another example of Robinson's work and style is here given:—

#### FINDERNE FLOWERS.

The Findernes lived in their manor hall,  
With its terrace high, and its turrets tall,  
And fair domain around,  
A gentle race, forsooth, were they,  
Maidens as fair as the bloom of May,  
And young men valour crowned.

Sir Geoffrey went to the Holy Land,  
To fight for the Cross in the Crusade Band,  
And the proud Turk laid low,  
Returning safe when the fight was fought;  
Not gold or jewels or spoils he brought,  
Wrung from the vanquished foe.

But he brought sweet flowers of Palestine,  
Of the land once trod by foot Divine,  
To plant around his home.  
He planted them with a pious care,  
On the terrace of his hall so fair,  
Where he was wont to roam.

And there those flowers took root and grew,  
 And their lovely fragrance, form, and hue,  
 Sir Geoffrey's care repaid.  
 And the Findernes prized those Eastern  
 flowers,  
 And o'er them often in summer hours  
 Bent Finderne youth and maid.

The Finderne race from the earth is gone,  
 Of their manor hall stands not a stone;  
 But still their memory  
 Lives in the flowers Sir Geoffrey brought  
 From Palestine, with beautiful thought,  
 Which still grow wild and free.

Upon a meadow bank so green,  
 Where erst the terrace fair hath been,  
 Where breezes softly sigh,  
 And "Finderne's Flowers" they call them still,  
 And say those flowers, do what you will,  
 Will never fade or die.

I knew Ralph Bernard Robinson well in his later years. It was in the summer of 1898 that I first met him. Business in connection with the excavation of Melandra Castle took me to Glossop, and there I found the poet—a tall old man, with dreamy eyes, and hair white as snow. There was just a perceptible stoop about the shoulders, but he scarcely gave one the idea of age. We talked of history of bygone people who had lived and died in the north-east horn of Cheshire, in the long ago; of the wild old legends of the place, and of queer customs of the days gone by. Mr. Robinson was brim full of anecdote; he even talked of writings for the future; of the publication of other poems on the same old well-loved themes. Then we chatted on the scheme for the excavation of Melandra Castle, which was becoming popular about that time, and in this fashion the evening passed along. I met him often after that; he came to see me several times at Hyde, and it was with regret that I heard of his death.

The earlier part of his life was spent in Mottram, but afterwards he removed to Glossop.

At one time he was a schoolmaster, and later acted as Librarian under Lord Howard of Glossop, at the Glossop Town Hall. He died on December 2nd, 1900, in his 72nd year, and was buried in the Glossop Cemetery. Mr. Robinson was a Roman Catholic, and a good part of his writings deal with religious subjects.

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### XXXII.

#### ISAAC BARDSTLEY, A BARD OF STALYBRIDGE.

The subject of this sketch is a native of Manchester, where he was born in 1830; and for upwards of half-a-century he has played a very prominent part in local literary circles. He was the friend of Prince, Laycock, Brierley, Twist, Barlow—and in fact of nearly every other writer of note who has flourished in south-east Lancashire, and north-east Cheshire during the latter-half of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth century.

His life has been one of hard work and activity. His father died when Isaac was only nine years of age. At eight years of age the lad commenced work in a silk mill; subsequently he worked in every department of a cotton mill; and for some years was book-keeper for an Engineer and Iron-founder. For twenty years he lived in Ashton-under-Lyne, then for a number of years in Stalybridge, where he married; he also resided for 33 years in Oldham.

Towards the close of the nineteenth century, I made the acquaintance of Mr. Bardsley, and have had some interesting chats, and engaged in long correspondence

with him. His reminiscences are most interesting, and would fill a good-sized volume. He was present at most of the great literary gatherings at which Ben Brierley figured during the closing years of that writer's life. He came to Hyde, and read a poem of his own composition at the gathering held in the Mechanics' Institute, when the portrait of John Critchley Prince was presented to the town of Hyde.

Mr. Bardsley has been a prolific writer; having written over 9,000 lines of poetry, which have seen the light in various Lancashire and Cheshire Journals. He has written on nearly every conceivable subject, and has won fame as a reciter of his own pieces. Most of the local writers of verse have at some time or other inscribed poems to him. As samples of his muse I append the following:

#### L I N E S.

"I cannot sing the good old songs  
 I used to sing of yore,  
 Nor charm the ears of listening throngs—  
 My singing days are o'er.  
 From songs and glees and music drear,  
 I feel I must retire;  
 Let others please the listening ear,  
 And tune Apollo's lyre.

Since I began the tuneful art,  
 Long years have sped away;  
 In minstrelsy I've borne a part  
 Near half a century.  
 Great minstrels I have known of yore,  
 The foremost of their day,  
 Renowned in song and music lore,  
 Who now have passed away.

We cannot alter nature's plan,  
 Old age we cannot stay;  
 The gifts allotted unto man  
 Long service will decay;  
 The years of man are but a span,  
 And life is but a play:  
 Creation's lord,—proud, peerless man,—  
 The creature of a day.

## XXXIII.

## RICHARD DRIVER.

Among the less known local rhymers contemporary with John Critchley Prince was Richard Driver of Hyde—the son of James Driver, who was also a local poet. By occupation he was a factory operative, but he seems to have possessed more than the average intelligence of men of his class, and won distinction by the part he took in promoting movements for the welfare of the working people. He was an energetic worker on behalf of the temperance cause, and often addressed meetings in the Temperance Hall, George-street, Hyde. About 1869 he left England, and settled in the United States.

Much of his verse was printed by Mr. George Booth, of Hyde, and generally appeared in sheet form. The following extracts from his works are taken from a poem entitled

## TEETOTAL FACTS.

“The temperance movement has become  
A great, a mighty power;  
It checks the onward march of vice,  
And saves the youthful flower.

It is a great and solemn truth  
That nations never rise,  
But by an effort of the few  
To make the people wise.

The few great men with lofty souls  
Lead on the nation’s van—  
’Tis knowledge, not the strongest arm,  
That makes the greatest man.

Richard Driver wrote much in prose as well as verse, both in England and in America. He contributed a series of letters to the “North Cheshire Herald” on “Modern Spiritualism,” and also issued various political manifestoes to the people of Hyde. One of these,

under date "Newton Moor, Nov. 3rd, 1868," was entitled "To the Liberal Electors of Hyde and Elsewhere," and contained a condemnation of Mr. Gladstone's policy on the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church. After his settlement in America Mr. Driver also used his pen in the political arena, writing poems denouncing the policy of the notorious Clan-na-Gael, and among these he reprinted the above-mentioned address to the Electors of Hyde. Among other prose pieces published in America were a series of articles entitled "Labour Nut Crackers"—which, as their title implies, deal with labour topics.

In 1904, after much inquiring, I got to know that Richard Driver was living in Fall River, Mass.; and, in response to a letter, he sent me a small book published in America, containing a collection of his principal literary work written since his emigration to the "States." Many of his poems grapple with American politics, and it is pleasing to note that the more he saw of American political methods the more did he feel proud that he was an Englishman. From a man who like Richard Driver has lived in the United States for nearly 40 years, the following lines on "John and Sam" come as a treat. They were written at the time Grover Cleveland published his version of the Munroe Doctrine, which appeared to be that England must submit herself quietly to insults and dictation from the United States. Many of the Yankees set about to howl England down, and insinuate that England was afraid of the "Stars and Stripes," but Richard Driver fearlessly published a poem in opposition to the insane sentiment of the American Jingoes,

## "JOHN AND SAM."

If Uncle Sammy strikes John Bull,  
 Will John Bull strike Sam back again?  
 Of course he will, and the first blow  
 Will paralyse old Jingo's brain.

Old Jingo thinks John will not fight,  
 Now that will prove Sam's great mistake,  
 For every blow Sam gives old John,  
 He more than one will have to take.

John Bull will strike Sam with his fleet,  
 And through his head will send a shell,  
 And while Sam's house is all ablaze,  
 Let Clan-na-Gael and Jingo yell.

When Uncle Sam is burned out,  
 John Bull will make his Lion roar,  
 And leave poor Sam in that sad fix,  
 Just where he left him twice before.

John and his lion make a sight,—  
 A grander sight there cannot be,  
 Than old John Bull sat at his ease,  
 With his great Lion on his knee.

Napoleon was a Monroe King,  
 A little despot full of fight;  
 He put his own strong selfish will  
 Into the place of common right.

Of course Nap. was a mighty man,  
 Look how he made and unmade Kings,  
 And played with them just like a child  
 Will play with dolls and other things.

He was a full-bred selfish man,  
 A little Monroe at his birth;  
 When asked what he wanted most,  
 He said—"I want to boss the earth."

And that is what he tried to do,  
 He kept old Grab-all on the trot;  
 Old Despot said—"Stand in my way  
 If you want crushing on the spot."

But when little Monroe met John Bull,  
 John's lion gave roar after roar,  
 And then he gave poor Nap. a blow,  
 That left him prostrate on the floor.

Poor little Monroe knocked out,  
 It took Jchn Bull to give him fits,  
 And put him where he could not play  
 His Monroe, meddling, selfish tricks.

## XXXIV.

THE BALLAD OF LEECH AND THE  
LAWYER.

William Hamilton, of Stockport, was at one time a foreman for Mr. George Booth, of Hyde, the founder of the "North Cheshire Herald." He was a versifier of more than average merit, and cast into pithy rhyme accounts of many interesting topics of the day. I have not been able to secure any very definite particulars concerning him, but the late Mr. Robert Higham, J.P., assured me that he published several interesting pieces dealing with local events, and that he was the author of the one-time popular ditty entitled "Leech and the Lawyer." His pieces would be written about the middle of the nineteenth century.

## LEECH AND THE LAWYER.

Not long ago there met two men  
On Mottram-road, I'll not say when,  
Each in his own peculiar way  
Intent on business that day.

They each were mounted on a nag,  
And of their worth did freely brag;  
No other horse was worth a straw  
Compared with that that carried Law.

But Leech, of course, would not say so,  
For his one was the best to go;  
A fence the mare feared not a jot,  
But bolted over like a shot.

The Lawyer being fond of sport,  
Thought to himself, "This is the sort  
To lead the hunt and show the way;  
By jove, I am in luck to-day."

But as he had been tricked before  
With buying horses, less or more,  
He thought he now would try to dodge,  
So wanted Leech to jump a hedge.

"Nay, nay," said Leech, "I am no rider,  
But you may, if you'll get astride her;"  
So up jump'd Law, and in a crack  
Was o'er the hedge, and soon came back.

Said Mr. Law, "The mare will suit!  
What money will you want to boot  
'Twixt yours and mine, and give me luck?"  
"Well, dash," said Leech, "I want a  
ruck."

A little haggling 'twixt the pair  
Took place, and Lawyer owned the mare,  
Paying boot to Leech just seven pounds  
ten,  
Who laughing, thought—he's done again.

The Lawyer said, "I'm right this round,  
For the horse just sold I gave five pound;"  
"Well, well," said Leech, "the bargain's  
o'er,  
I now may tell, mine cost just four!"

This made the Lawyer look quite blue,  
And of the swap began to rue;  
To Hyde he rode, ne'er drawing reins,  
And put the mare up at the Queen's.

He ask'd the host if ought he knew  
About the mare—John look'd askew,  
And said "We'll send for Mr. Platt,"  
Who said to Law, "You're done, that's  
flat."

This made the lawyer look more queer!  
He said, "The mare may tarry here;  
At public auction I think I'll stake her,  
If she does not sell, the devil may take  
her."

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### XXXV.

#### THE BALLAD OF MARPLE HALL.

JOHN LEIGH, AUTHOR OF LAYS AND  
LEGENDS OF CHESHIRE.

John Leigh, M.R.C.S., author of "Lays and Legends of Cheshire," was a descendant of the ancient and distinguished Cheshire family,—the Leights of West Hall, High Leigh. He was born at Fox Denton Hall, near Middleton, Lancashire, and was educated at the Moravian School, Dukinfield. He entered the medical profession, and was appointed one of the resident medical officers to the Manchester Royal Infirmary. On the creation of a Health Department in 1868, he received the appointment of Medical Officer of Health for Manchester, and as advisor to the

City Corporation played an important part in bettering the sanitary administration of Manchester. He was a distinguished geologist and ornithologist; and was also a man of refined literary tastes, being President of the Spenser Society, and possessing a fine library of rare and valuable books. He died in November, 1888.

John Leigh published in 1861 "Sir Percy Leigh—A Legend of Lyme, and other Ballads." Later a larger book—"Lays and Legends of Cheshire," also came from his pen.

The following lines are taken from his ballad on

#### MARPLE HALL.

High on a craggy steep there stands,  
Near Marple's fertile vale,  
An ancient ivy-covered house  
That overlooks the dale.

And lofty woods of elm and oak  
That ancient house enclose,  
And on the walls a neighb'ring yew  
Its sombre shadow throws.

A many-gabled house it is,  
With antique turret crowned,  
And many a quaint device designed  
In carvings rude is found.

'Tis said, when as the moon's bright beams  
Illumine Marple's Hall,  
A headless form is seen to glide  
Along the oaken wall.

Sometimes within the corridor  
The figure flits along,  
Or yet the darkly-panelled rooms  
It noiseless moves among.

One room there is which none approach  
Save in the light of day;  
Ever the ghost to that dread room  
Is seen to wend its way.

Anon upon the terrace walk  
The ghost is also seen,  
Encased in suit of armour bright,  
Of steel and silver sheen.

And on the shoulders now beheld  
A head right proudly worn,  
With waving plume and regal crest  
On gleaming helmet borne.

And striding down the wood-clad steep  
 And by the rippling stream,  
 The ghost is seen to take its way,  
 And vanish like a dream.

And none within that ancient house  
 Are ever known to stay;  
 Its gloomy rooms are tenantless,  
 And hastening to decay.

Time was when men in conclave met,  
 With matters high in hand;  
 The kingdom was with discord rent,  
 Rebellion stalked the land.

And arms and suits of armour hung  
 Upon the ancient wall.  
 And clank of armed heel was heard  
 Full oft in Marple Hall.

And scabbards rattled on the floors,  
 And men, resolved and stern,  
 Vowed that with their mailed hands  
 Their freedom they would earn.

And ready harnessed many a steed  
 Within the stables stood;  
 And horsemen dashed along at speed  
 The road through Marple Wood.

And news was carried to and fro  
 Of Rupert and the King;  
 Of what befell the cavaliers  
 Swift tidings they would bring.

How that Lord Strange at Manchester  
 Did threat the town to sack;  
 When the people rose upon their foes  
 And beat his lordship back.

And how at Stockport still the men  
 Resolved to hold their own,  
 And vowed to keep their arms until  
 The king was overthrown.

And many a bloody fight was fought  
 And many a bloody fray;  
 And brother's arm with brother's met  
 On many a fatal day.

And now a hapless fugitive  
 The wretched monarch fled;  
 No place within his kingdom wide  
 To lay his weary head.  
 And now the people held their breath,  
 So terrible a thing,  
 That men should be in conclave met  
 To try their rightful king.

And though he made a proud defence,  
 His foes yet willed it so,  
 His head should from his shoulders fall  
 By ignominious blow.

And he who did the doom pronounce  
 By which his head should fall,  
 Came back at length a broken man,  
 To die at Marple Hall.

And in a gloomy room he lay,  
 Nor asked to be forgiven;  
 Nor ever taught his soul to pray  
 Nor made his peace with Heaven.

And in no grave his body lies,  
 No tablet doth disclose,  
 That in the sepulchre at last,  
 John Bradshaw found repose.

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### XXXVI.

JOEL WAINWRIGHT, ESQ., J.P.

(AUTHOR OF "MEMORIES OF MARPLE,"  
 ETC., ETC.).

Although Mr. Joel Wainwright will be best known to literary circles of the future as the author of one of the most delightful books ever published upon the local history and folk-lore of Marple and its neighbourhood, his poetic talents have been sufficiently manifested to compel the historian to accord him a place among the poetic worthies of East Cheshire. Of this, however, more hereafter.

One cannot treat Mr. Wainwright's life in the orthodox fashion by merely cataloguing the number of his literary achievements. To do full justice to the subject, it is necessary to thoroughly describe the man and his surroundings. In the first place there are few more delightful homes about Marple than Mr. Wainwright's at Finchwood; and certainly there are few local men more interesting than Mr. Joel Wainwright himself. He is

A MAN OF MANY PARTS,

and has done much to elevate the literary and artistic tone of the district. He is locally

famed as an elocutionist; is a pen and pencil artist of no mean ability, and a well-known lecturer on various subjects. In the last-named capacity he occupies a high position in the neighbourhood. An ardent lover of nature, he is an authority on the flora and fauna of the county, and has even added to the Coleoptera of the district. For over 40 years he has been an honorary member of the Field Naturalists' Society, and also honorary member of the Geographical Society; he has rendered good service as a member of the New Mills School Board; is a county magistrate, regular and conscientious in the discharge of his duties; and has for years taken a prominent part as a speaker on political platforms on behalf of the Conservative party. The foregoing list might lead the average reader to suppose that the subject of this sketch was a man who had never been hampered by business, but who had always enjoyed ample leisure to devote all his energy to the public and semi-public tasks referred to. And yet the reverse has been the case, for Mr. Wainwright has during the whole of his long life been one of the busiest of business men. He was born at Apethorn, near Hyde, on May 27th, 1831, and from his

#### EARLY DAYS

was brought face to face with the stern realities of life. Even his education was not attained without some hardship, for he attended the Stockport Grammar School; and winter and summer, fair weather or foul, he had to tramp the four miles to and from school each morning and night. He left school for good at the age of 13 years, but so firmly pursued was his determination to acquire knowledge, that to-day he is one of the best educated men in the neighbourhood. He

began work in a cotton mill immediately on leaving school, but the long day's work of that period did not deter him from study. The late Mr. Joseph Sidebotham, F.R.S., as early as 1848, gave lectures at his residence, and among those privileged and wise enough to attend was Joel Wainwright.

In 1849 he entered the service of the Strines Printing Company, of which Mr. Sidebotham was a partner. Mr. Wainwright began work in a humble position, at the weekly wage of 14 shillings, but he rapidly moved on and on, until he became sole works manager of this large and successful business; and when he retired at the end of 29 years' service, he was already a wealthy man for his station. His success was deserved, for it was won by labour; for 29 years he had worked an average of 13 hours per day.

Hard work and long hours, however, did not exhaust the vitality of this man, and in his earlier days at Strines he began to take an interest in literary and artistic pursuits. Along with a younger clerk, he conceived the idea of

#### A MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL,

which he conducted for several years; and which, for the variety of its contents, the character of its articles, and also as a work of art, is probably without its equal in the world, especially when the circumstances of its production are considered. To one who has never seen the journal, the last statement may appear to be a rash piece of speculation, but having seen and handled it, I make the assertion without hesitation. It possesses an artistic beauty and originality which is not to be found outside the illuminated volumes of the monks of old.

In 1878, owing to ill-health, Mr. Wainwright left the Strines Printworks, but on his recovery in 1880 he joined the firm of Fletcher and Holmes, accountants and surveyors, of Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester—known later as Fletcher, Holmes, and Wainwright. For years he was head of the firm which was afterwards carried on as "Wainwright, Son, and Co.," and he only retired from business in the winter of 1906.

In an earlier paragraph I made allusion to

#### MR. WAINWRIGHT'S HOME

—Finchwood, Marple Bridge. It is at once the home of a poet, an artist, a dreamer, and a practical man of affairs — for anomalous though it may sound, Mr. Wainwright is all these. It's situation is perfect, for it commands from every window some of the most beautiful views of the Derbyshire hills. The house itself is quite original, having been fashioned by Mr. Wainwright himself—who loves the light, the hills, the birds, the trees,—and who has built his house so that it shall minister, as far as a home can do, to all those artistic and higher longings of his nature.

Of Mr. Wainwright's personality much might be written. He is an old man, having passed the allotted span of three score years and ten; and yet he does not strike anyone as being old. He is more than 40 years older than the one who pens these lines, and yet I never feel a lack of interest and delight in his company—so young and vigorous is his spirit, so full of all that is bright and cheerful, and healthy in his conversation. One leaves him stronger and better for the time spent in his presence. And certainly some of my happiest hours have been those spent with him at Finchwood.

## Mr. Wainwright's

## LITERARY QUALITIES

have for some years found vent in lectures upon various subjects, which have afterwards been issued in booklet form. But in 1899 he published "Memories of Marple," a handsome and beautifully illustrated volume with the sub-title—"Pictorial and descriptive Reminiscences of a Life-time in Marple, Leisure Hours on the banks of the Goyt, the Tame, and the Etherow, with stories, old and new, of bygone days." Many of the illustrations are from the author's own pen, and these add greatly to the value of the book, for Mr. Wainwright's pen and ink sketches have long been famous.

Mr. Wainwright's verse is perhaps not so well-known as his prose efforts. For all that, it is good, and the pity is that there is not more of it. Mr. Wainwright himself repudiates and laughs at the idea of his being styled a poet. But no impartial judge would consider this series of articles complete unless Mr. Wainwright was included as a man possessing the instincts of true poetry, exemplified in an ardent love of nature and art in their most attractive forms. His poetical faculties have been made manifest through the agency of the unique Christmas cards which he has been sending to his friends for many years. The cards are works of art, and the sketches they contain are from the pen of the sender. The subjects are always interesting and picturesque, executed with marvellous neatness, showing in every line and leaf the true appreciation of the poetry of nature and art. The pictures are generally enhanced by lines of sentiment, also done by hand. From the many choice gems, the following are selected for reproduction,

Appended to a perfect drawing of Marple Hall, which is as microscopical as a steel engraving, are the lines—

As clinging ivy loves to clasp  
These massive walls with tender green,  
So may peace gird you round and round,  
And light your path with golden sheen.

And accompanying a beautiful picture, entitled

**“THE SUNDIAL.”**

“Horas non numero nisi serenas.”

Through winter snow and summer showers,  
Amid the trees, the plants, the flowers,  
I reckon none but sunny hours.”  
May memory glad alike be yours,  
Through good and ill while life endures,  
May you count none but happy hours.

To a picture of “The Old Watermill.”

May Christmastide again old Christmas joys  
recall;  
May blessings great be showered upon your  
hearth and hall!  
May ninety-eight advancing, your pleasures  
sweet increase!  
And life’s journey evermore be one of perfect  
peace!  
Let us make of things the best, where’er our  
lot be cast,  
“The mill will never grind with the water  
that has passed.”

**SCENE FROM SUMMER HOUSE WINDOW.  
MELLOR CHURCH IN DISTANCE.**

My morning window that commands  
Those meadows green and wooded lands,  
So sunny that each quickening ray  
Its panes receive of breaking day.

Thus may your views in life be bright,  
Your Christmas days renew delight,  
Nineteen hundred and years in store  
Bring health and peace for evermore.

The card for Christmas, 1900, was unique, entitled “Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest”; it shows us old Kruger, just toppling over into the sea of oblivion with his burden of 1900-Kruger war, Indian Famine, Strikes and Collisions, Cotton Famine,

Floods, China Maniacs, Anarchists, Regicides, and Coal Famine—all events of the year 1900. A graceful drawing of Peace, with the olive branch, baptising the new year infant 1901—then we have

“May century number twenty  
Bring the world all peace and plenty;  
May strife for ever cease!  
Then as each shall love his brother,  
Acting fair to one another,  
Shall happy days increase.

On the card of 1901 we have a classical figure of Youth at the fountain, pouring from his Vase into the cup of Venerable Age, the water of life, and the words—

Let the young now revel in wealth  
Of the wisdom of age and truth,  
May age have the blessing of health  
Renewed from the fountain of youth.

The white ensign of Peace throughout the world  
For evermore with goodwill be unfurled.

A pretty drawing of Finchwood Garden, with birds, bears the lines—

Here Nature tranquil sings in cadence restful,  
More musical than mortal lips can make;  
While earth resounds with Christmas carols  
gleeful.  
She bids our noblest sympathies awake.  
Oh! would that man, from Nature's lore, be  
learning  
To live at peace,—wise, temperate, and free;  
True to the law of right, goodwill returning,  
And thus fulfil his highest destiny.

The 1903 picture shows Mr. Wainwright at the Sundial, overlooking a charming scene of the  
SETTING SUN.

The words were intended to suggest that this would be “his last card”; fortunately, however, he has been able to continue.

“The length'ning shadows on the dial-plate  
Warn me to call my scattered thoughts to  
fold,  
And pen them safely ere it be too late;  
From the church tower I hear the curfew  
tolled.

The night steals on apace in yonder west,  
 Amid mild splendour, lo! the setting sun  
 Exhorteth man that it is time to rest;  
 And I, too, feel my work is nearly done.  
 If further lengthened be life's pilgrimage,  
 May Goodwill towards men still our souls  
 engage!"

For 1904 we have, on a Welsh scene of mountains, woods, and waters, the lines:—

"Sweet stream of Life, still, placid may'st  
 thou flow;  
 Bring us no fear of rough engulfing seas,  
 No shoals around, no hidden rocks before,  
 That we with thankful hearts, still gliding  
 on,  
 Serene and hopeful, may our wished-for  
 bourne attain.

For 1905, there was a picture of "Windy-bottom, on the Goyt," near Strines. This is really a perfect bit of rustic scenery, laboriously studied by Mr. Wainwright on the spot, where he is shown in the act of sketching. So much esteemed is it, that we know of scores of instances where the recipients have had it framed. The words are good, and could only come from the heart of the genuine lover of nature:

"This woodland dream and winding stream  
 Enchant me more and more,  
 Telling of joys in bygone days,  
 And pleasures which endure;—  
 Whispering that my trusty friends  
 Shall like them faithful be,  
 With dancing leaves and singing stream,  
 Abiding true to me.

For Christmas, 1906, we have a picture of a sylvan glade near Finchwood, and here we have again the artist asking for "rest," at "75 not out":

"Here let me rest, and find that deeper calm,  
 That rest of spirit in the world not found,  
 Where nature sheds her gracious healing  
 balm,  
 And stirs the heart with thankfulness pro-  
 found."

## XXXVII.

## MRS. ANNIE MARIA HONE.

This writer was a daughter of Mr. Geo. Booth, the founder of the "North Cheshire Herald," and was born in the house adjoining her father's shop in Market-street, Hyde. She published several books, among them being a novel—"Stanley Meredith"—some short prose stories, and various poetical works. Two of her books are entitled "Woman's Enterprise and Genius," and "Self-Help for Women." She also compiled and edited several volumes of poetry for London publishers; and one of her last works was the compilation of a book of poems for recitation, entitled "The Children's Casket," published in 1891.

Miss Booth married William Hone, of Reading and Hyde, and some time after her marriage left this district for London. She died in 1893, at Castle Howard, in Yorkshire, and was buried in the churchyard there. Her poetical work was varied in character. She won fame as a writer of ballads, but her poems are chiefly distinguished for their purity and the high nature of their teaching. The following examples will give some idea of her powers:—

## THE OLD CATHEDRAL BELLS.

O, the sweet melodious chiming  
Of the old Cathedral Bells,  
How their dear familiar music  
O'er my heart in rapture swells!  
Chiming through the light of morning,  
Chiming through the gloom of even,  
Listen how each golden cadence  
Echoes of the bells of heaven!

So my heart, if well tuned ever,  
 With fresh meed of prayer and praise—  
 Through the sunshine, through the gloaming,  
 Will its songs of joys upraise—  
 For the goodness which hath followed  
 All my dutious paths below,  
 And the mercies which have crowned me,  
 As I still rejoicing go.

It would be difficult to find lines of greater sweetness in our hymnology than those in her poem

**"IN HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE."**

Only to do Thy will,  
 Thy cross to bear,  
 All Thy commands fulfil,  
 Rough road or fair.  
 Only in Thee to trust,  
 Fearing no foe;  
 Faithful and true and just,  
 Where'er I go.

Annie Hone wrote much for children. Some of her ballads for the young—notably that on Rip Van Winkle—are very fine, and indeed all her children's pieces possess a simple beauty which wins one to the writer. So much was she the children's friend that it would be inappropriate to conclude the notice without quoting the lines of one of her poems on the young:

**CHILDREN AT PLAY.**

No fairer scene in all the world  
 Than rises to my view,  
 Beneath the bending apple boughs,  
 Whose blossoms flutter through  
 The vista, where my children play,  
 My own dear treasures fair—  
 Whose songs of rapture and sweet mirth  
 With music fill the air.

O beauteous scenes of golden youth!  
 My darlings glad and pure!  
 God only knows what future cares  
 Their hearts may yet endure;  
 To-day I'll sing with them in joy,  
 Though sorrows I have known—  
 I cannot say the world is sad  
 While I such treasures own.

Mrs. Hone seems to have fully realised the true value of her work, and probably she had in mind the place she occupied in the poetic world when she penned her sweet lines on

### THE ROSE.

And thus would I,—joy radiant—  
Bloom in my little place;  
Contented with the blessings  
Of Wisdom and of Grace.

And if I bloom in beauty,  
O let me, like the Rose,  
Cheer all who gaze upon me,  
And heavenly gifts disclose.

Without one thought of envy—  
As roses spread perfume;—  
To make the world around me  
The brighter for my bloom.

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### XXXVIII.

#### REV. THOMAS M. FREEMAN, OF MELLOR.

Strictly speaking this writer was a Derbyshire bard, but his effusions were for the most part published in Cheshire newspapers, and he came to be regarded by the literary people of East Cheshire as one of the local poets of the district. He was Vicar of Mellor, and held the living for many years; his father and grandfather before him had also been parsons of Mellor—indeed the three of them held the living for considerably over a century. He died on January 2nd, 1906, being then over 76 years of age.

About 1872 Mr. Freeman published a collection of his poems in book-form under the title of “Spare Minutes of a Country Parson—a volume of miscellaneous poetry on a great variety of subjects.”

A good example of Mr. Freeman's muse is the piece entitled

ON HEARING (IN THE DISTANCE) THE SOUND OF MARPLE BELLS.

When sinks the golden sun to rest  
In the warm glow of summer eve,  
Like voices rich of angels blest  
Those sweet sounds to our ears do cleave.

When care sat lightly on my soul  
In childhood's light and gladsome prime,  
Upon the swelling breeze did roll  
Across the vale those bells' full chime.

Well-pleas'd I listen'd to the sound  
Which forth from that dark tow'r did peal,  
And now (when years have gather'd round),  
I hearken still, and pleasure feel.

Not quite the same as ripples o'er  
A child's light-hearted, merry soul,  
But chasteñ'd, as now, more and more  
Deep thoughts through memory's channel roll.

Long ere mine eyes first saw the light  
Those bells the same as now did peal,  
And when my soul has taken flight  
On other ears their sounds will steal.

They speak to us of sacred days,  
Of worship paid to Heaven's high King,  
Of joy found in the work of praise,  
Of peace and hope that faith can bring.

Mellor Vicarage, October 7th, 1895.

Near the end of his life Mr. Freeman published a volume of blank verse, which came in for some strong criticism at the hands of the reviewers.



## XXXIX.

## MRS. JOSEPH MOORES, OF DENTON.

This lady, whose maiden name was Betsy Crompton, was born at Oldham, but when quite a child removed with her parents to Farmer Fold, Haughton. The rest of her life was spent in the neighbourhood of Denton and Haughton, and she became well-known in local Sunday School circles, being a scholar and for many years a teacher at Hope Chapel Sunday School, Denton. She appears to have been addicted to versifying when quite a girl, and received encouragement from the late Benjamin Ashton, Esq., J.P., at whose mill she worked as an operative. Another patron of the poetess was the late Mr. Bradbury, colliery master, who had copies of a poem written by her on the occasion of the death of a well-known deacon of Hope Chapel, printed and presented to every member of the congregation worshipping there. Mrs. Moores wrote in the dialect as well as in English; she dealt with a variety of subjects, and wrote upon some of the chief events of the day in Denton and Haughton. Most of her work was published in the local press. She died in 1879 at the age of 50 years, and is buried in the graveyard adjoining Hope Chapel, Denton. Mrs. Moores left six children, one of her daughters being married to Mr. Samuel Marshall, hat manufacturer, of Hyde. The first example here given of her work is a piece entitled

## THE FIRST ROSE OF SUMMER.

Thou first rose of summer, I hail thee with  
joy,

For the sake of old times that are past;  
When thou seemed o'er my pathway without  
an alloy,

A halo of gladness to cast,

As I gaze on thy beauty, thou fair queen of flowers,

My mind back to childhood is borne,  
When my feet traversed far through Elysian bowers,

Thy petals my hair to adorn.

O childhood, that happiest season of life,  
What other can with it compare?  
With beauty and gladness the present is rife,  
For the future it has not a care.

Thy charms, simple flower, are nature's free gift,

Unaided by culture or toil,  
Though that might enhance the beauty of some,

Thy delicate tints it would spoil.

There is not a flower, whether cultured or wild,

But what has a share in my love,  
But thou 'mong them all will supremacy hold,  
Thou art all other flowerets above.

Thou herald of summer, e'en now as I muse,  
My heart seems bereft of its load,  
And my mind soars above from this beautiful scene

Of nature, to nature's true God.

The passion I bear thee will never depart,  
Till life shall approach to its close,  
For thou teachest this wavering rebellious heart

To centre on Sharon's sweet rose.

And when I shall quietly sleep in the dust,  
There's one little flower I crave;  
It is not a tablet of marble I ask,  
But plant the wild rose on my grave.

Of Mrs. Moore's dialect pieces, the best is a lengthy poem (which want of space prevents us quoting in full), entitled

#### CHANGES SIN AW WUR A WENCH.

Oft aw look back to th' owd village skoo,  
Ut aw went to when nobbut a choilt,  
Un aw've still in mi een th'owd schoolmester,  
too,

As he flatter't mi' larnin', and smoilt.

Now look what a change ther has bin,  
What studyin', expense, un a do;  
Whv. a twelve year owd pupil con teach yo  
more now,  
Nor ever th'owd pedagogue knew.

Men use't wear thoose great jackets wi laps  
 Ut reach't welly deawn to ther feet;  
 Ther wives ned no baskets fur t' pur ther  
 stuff in,  
 When they bowt in ut Setherday neet.

For pockets held butter un soap,  
 Tea, sugar, beef, candles un cheese,  
 Aye, un mony a nice mixture aw've seen i'  
 thoose days,  
 Ut one never yers tell on i' theese.

Un eh dear, when they'n bin crom'd full  
 Thin gan many a fellow a swat;  
 Un aw'll tell yo o' one that could stuff in no  
 more,  
 So he put his swine's grease in his hat.

Us he went on he geet rather warm,  
 An't result yo mun guess for yer'sel,  
 For he had'no gone far when some urchins  
 cried out,  
 "Wheer's t' had thi pomatum, owd swell"?

Now folk has more white in ther een,  
 Ut thoose fashions are gradely gone out,  
 For ther's noather a pocket nor hat now-a-  
 days,  
 Yo can stuff in so much as a clout.

Neaw when aw're a great hoblin wench,  
 No beards or mustachers were worn;  
 A man's face were as bare as the "back" o'  
 mi hond,  
 Just same as it wer when he're born.

Bur neaw, if he's lost o his teeth,  
 Un his meawth's as deformed as owd  
 Scrat,  
 He's a great tuft o' yure fur't comb nicely  
 o'er,  
 So nobody is wiser o' that.

Ther's some ut's as big as a brush,  
 Ut covers tone hawve o' ther face,  
 Eh! aw'd like see um tackle a treacle cake  
 neaw,  
 Like they us't do i' my younger days.



## XL.

## SAMUEL ASHTON, OF GODLEY.

The subject of this notice was born at Oldham, in the year 1834, but his parents, who were cotton operatives, removed to Hyde when he was nine years of age. Samuel Ashton was sent to work as a weaver at Kingston Mills at the age of 13 years. Later he worked at Greencroft Mill, and Millwood Mill, retiring in 1895. For the last 35 years of his career in the factory he was cloth-looker, and afterwards cashier at Millwood Mill. At one time he lived in Commercial Brow, Newton, where he carried on a newsagent's business. On giving up business he removed to Leigh-street, Godley, where he still resides. Mr. Ashton takes great interest in music and literature. He was on terms of close friendship with J. C. Prince and Samuel Laycock, and one of Laycock's poems is dedicated to him. For many years he has contributed to the local press both in verse and prose—principally under a nom-de-plume. The present writer has many pleasant recollections of acts of kindness and encouragement from him. Mr. Ashton has written in the dialect as well as in English. The following poem was written by him after the death of his wife in 1906.

## SOLITUDE.

I am lonely and sad, with cares I'm opprest,  
By night or by day, not so often at rest,  
I have none to console me when troubles do  
come,  
Or make me feel happy as homeward I roam.  
I have lost a kind partner, a good, cheerful  
wife,  
Whose smile was like sunshine, the joy of my  
life;  
But now she is gone from all trouble and care,  
To a haven of rest, may we meet again there.

My fireside is cheerless, though the fire burn-  
eth bright,  
I have no one to speak to from morn until  
night;  
Whenever I look there is one vacant place,  
No more can I gaze on her sweet smiling face.  
And others will miss her, to all she was kind,  
Kind thoughts and kind actions pervaded her  
mind;  
To the young or the old she was always the  
same,  
Obliging, good tempered, and none could her  
blame.  
I am lonely and sad, yet I will not despair,  
For Time, the great healer, may soften my  
care.  
I may get consolation when met by a friend,  
So I'll live on in patience, and wait for my  
end.

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## XLI.

## JAMES BENT, OF HYDE.

James Bent was born in Port-street, Hyde, and is the son of Noah Bent, whose father came to Hyde from Flixton in 1808. When quite a boy he was put to work at Greencroft Mill, and consequently his early education was limited. He left the mill at the time of the Cotton Panic, and became a clogger, carrying on his new trade for 20 years. Then he commenced his present business of collecting rents and medical accounts. He has taken a deep interest in music, and for 52 years was a member of the choir at Union-street Chapel, being conductor for part of that time. In recognition of his 52 years' service the choir presented him with a gold watchguard. For many years Mr. Bent has been recognised as one of the local bards. Writing upon a multitude of subjects, and in the dialect as well as in English, his works would fill a good-sized volume. There is generally a good moral

in his pieces; and some of his shorter poems are full of sweetness. Lack of space prevents more than the quotation of one of his popular songs.

### I THINK OF THEE.

I think of thee, belov'd one,  
 When the moon is bright,  
 And when the stars are watching  
 Through the lonely night,  
 When not a fleecy vapour  
 Floats across the sky,  
 I think of thee and almost  
 Fancy thou art nigh.  
 I think of thee when sunbeams,  
 Mellow, clear, and bright,  
 Flood the whole earth with gladness,  
 With grandeur and delight;  
 And when the rich, warm zephyrs,  
 Passing, gently sigh,  
 I think of thee and almost  
 Fancy thou art nigh.  
 I think of thee when Nature,  
 Beautiful and fair,  
 Clad in its vernal garments,  
 Draws the spirit there.  
 But though its glories charm me,  
 Filling me with joy,  
 I think of thee and almost  
 Feel that thou art nigh.  
 I think of thee though absent,  
 Far across the sea;  
 I think in all life's changes  
 Of thy deep love to me  
 Of hours so sweet and tender  
 Before that sad "Good-bye,"  
 And thinking, oh, I long once more  
 To feel thy presence nigh.

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### XLII.

#### JAMES BRADLEY, OF GEE CROSS.

This writer, who is known to literary circles as the author of 'Reminiscences in the life of Joshua Bradley,' was born at Godley Hall Hill, and has played a prominent part in local educational affairs. At the time of the Cotton Panic he became teacher of a Day School for adult operatives, opened by the

Hyde Local Relief Board. Later he became master of Boston Mills Day School, and also conducted evening elementary classes for young men at the Hyde Mechanics' Institution. Mr. Bradley also opened and for ten years was master of the Victoria Day Schools, Dukinfield. For 25 years he acted as Secretary of the Hyde Mechanics' Institution, and in addition, he also conducted a day school at the Institution for many years. Always keenly interested in literature he has often given vent to his thoughts in the form of sonnets; and there are few events of local importance that have not been noticed by him in this fashion. He is one of the few local men who have met with success in this difficult form of poetical composition. Space will only permit of one specimen of the many effusions of his pen.

#### SONNET

#### WRITTEN AT THE TIME OF THE EXPLO- SION AT THE HYDE COLLERY, 1889.

Deep down the dismal and far-reaching mine  
Two hundred fathoms 'neath the treacherous  
ground,  
Where ne'er one ray of heaven's own light is  
found  
To cheer the gloom, those men at duty's  
shrine  
Knew naught, indeed, of their impending  
doom.

Toiling for those of all they held most dear,  
And at the time when they had least to fear,  
The fiery fiend flashed forth with awful boom,  
Dealing destruction dire, and death around;  
And sires and sons—yea, twice ten souls and  
three,  
Were all launched forth into eternity.  
'Mid tears, and choking sighs and griefs pro-  
found,  
Good Christians all, with you the orphans  
plead,  
Bestow the needful aid, and Heaven will bless  
the deed.

Mr. Bradley was one of the leading spirits in the movement which secured for the public the memorial portrait of Prince, now in the Free Library. As his fellow secretary of the memorial committee, I can bear testimony to the zeal with which he laboured on behalf of that deserving object.

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## XLIII.

## JOHN CHARLES TWIST, F.R.S.S.

Born on January 29th, 1842, Mr. Twist was a native of Compstall, but his parents removed to Ashton-under-Lyne, with which town he was for years identified as a factory operative and a local poet. A staunch Churchman, and a Sunday School worker, he was one of the initiators of the St. Michael's Men's Class, Ashton-under-Lyne; and was also a powerful speaker on behalf of the Conservative party. Eventually he took to journalism, and became joint-founder and first Editor of "Scraps." He was assistant editor of the "Weekly Budget," and the "Pictorial News," was also connected with "Snacks" and "The World's Comic," and was proprietor of the "Boys' Graphic" and the "Hour of Rest." He died in 1906, and was interred in London. One of his best humorous poems is "Tommy Stroo's Ghost," and I have heard this recited with great success on several occasions. The following is an example of his staider style.

## REMF MBRANCE.

The moon was high—the heavens serene,  
And studded o'er with silent stars;  
Not e'en a fleck of cloud was seen,  
Since Night had burst Day's amber bars,  
It was a joyous time, I ween,  
When we roamed o'er the walks of Lynn.

• • • • •

Ah, never shall my memory lose,  
 The fond remembrance of that hour;  
 When thou wert with me, clinging close,  
   As clings the ivy to the tower:  
 Dear, dear to me, for aye I ween,  
   Will be the peerless walks of Lynn.

'Tis autumn now, the leaves lie dead;  
   The nights are cheerless, long and drear;  
 And I am lonely now thou'rt fled,  
   Ah, would, my Alice, thou wert here;  
 Oh, heavy is the time I ween,  
   And cheerless now the walks of Lynn.

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## XLIV.

## J A M E S     H I L T O N.

Mr. Hilton was born at Gee Cross, in 1846; was sent to work at Apethorn Factory when nine years of age; and shortly after that, had the misfortune to lose both father and mother. About the time of the Cotton Panic, the Hiltons left Hyde, and resided for several years at Bamber Bridge, near Preston, and afterwards at Oswaldtwistle. At the latter place James Hilton was thrown out of employment, and he forthwith enlisted in the 21st Hussars, and was sent to India, where he served 10 years. On leaving the army, he returned to Hyde, and began to write for the local papers, both in verse and prose. His prose work includes "Pictures of Modern Life," and "The Land and its Owners," "Six Months in the Himalayas," "Home Spun Yarns," and "The Chronicles of Cravensworth" — the two last-named being sketches in the Lancashire dialect. Some of his pieces were successful in literary prize competitions, and in this way he won considerable sums of money. He is interested in Botany and Natural History, and on these two subjects has lectured in many of the schools and institutions of Hyde.

Many of his poems have won popularity as recitations. His verse—whether in the dialect or in English—is pleasant, full of music, and sound in sentiment, and deserves more praise than it has hitherto received. Indeed its publication in book form would enrich the literature of the neighbourhood. At the present time Mr. Hilton is in business as a confectioner at Sandbach, Cheshire.

An idea of his qualities will be gleaned from a perusal of his poem entitled:—

#### FLOWERS.

I love to stroll in a woodland dell,  
Where hyacinths empurpl'd dwell.  
And where the bright-eyed campion red  
Uprises from its mossy bed:  
Where feathery ferns resplendent show,  
Reflected in the stream below:  
There seated in some quiet nook  
I read a page from nature's book.

Adown the dell there runs a stream  
Where lichens and rare mosses gleam,  
Where feathered songsters perched on high,  
Warble forth their songs of joy;  
The skull-cap with its blossom blue,  
And flowers of every shade and hue,  
Their foliage shining bright and green,  
Make one harmonious, pleasant scene.

I love to climb the mountain's side,  
To view the heath in all its pride;  
Where golden gorse its blossom spreads,  
And mountain violets droop their heads;  
The tread-flax clinging to the wall,  
The moor-fowl's cry, the shepherd's call,  
The bleating sheep with tinkling bell  
Are scenes that oft in memory dwell.

I love to roam in field and lane  
To see the waving golden grain,  
The fox-glove growing 'neath the hedge,  
The bird-weed and the water-sedge,  
The primrose and the daisy, too,  
And violet sweet with eye of blue:  
To gaze at cattle as they lie,  
And listen to the corn-crake's cry.

On river banks I love to go,  
 And watch the glittering waters flow,  
 While butterbur and cicely sweet  
 Are growing underneath my feet,  
 There in that quiet, sheltered spot,  
 I find the true forget-me-not,  
 Fit emblem of a love so true,  
 With pretty flowers of azure hue.

In thicket, copse, and woody glen,  
 E'en in the homes of busy men,  
 In palace, cot and public mart,  
 We oft find flowers play a part;  
 On mountain top, in wood and vale,  
 On river's bank, by road and rail,  
 Bedecking all our meads and bowers  
 Where'er we go, flowers, sweet flowers.

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XLV.

WILLIAM EDWARD WILSON, OF GEE  
 CROSS.

This bard was born at Hyde on November 21st, 1852, and at the age of 13 years began to work at the Newton Bank Printworks, but afterwards became an operative at Slack Mills, Hyde. In 1873 he sailed for America, where he worked for two years in Lawrence City, Mass. Having returned to England, he again went to America, where he stayed from 1879 to 1882, after which he settled for life in his native town of Hyde. His poetry was often written under difficulties, and he once informed me that he often dotted down his lines, with chalk on the floor of the mill during his labour, and then copied them out on paper when the machinery stopped. He was a contributor to the local press, and to several American journals. Under the nom-de-plume of "Meddlesome Matty" he wrote hundreds of prose pieces for the "North Cheshire Herald," and was also famous as the author of thousands of "In Memoriam Verses" and epitaphs.

Two of his biggest efforts were "Little Madge, or Golden Links from the Chain of Love" (a service of song); and "Little Fred," a prose stcry. He died on March 24th, 1905, and is buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard, Hyde. There is a pathetic interest attached to this article, inasmuch as Wilson himself supplied the writer with the details here given, and was eagerly looking forward to its appearance. But his hopes were never gratified, and he died without having seen in print the first biographical notice ever written of him.

Wilson wrote in the dialect, but perhaps his best work was that in ordinary English, a specimen of which is appended:—

#### WERNETH LOW.

Thou dear lovely spot near my home, I adore  
thee,  
Thy tall, tender trees, how graceful they  
stand;  
To the tune of thy brooklets my heart beats  
responsive,  
The while I do gaze on that wide track of  
land.

How lovely to view are thy finely clipped  
hedgerows,—  
Each hillock and dell wears a mantle of  
green,  
While the young feathered songsters which  
fly o'er thy bosom  
Add grandeur and interest to nature's true  
scene.

The stranger may boast of the lands he has  
dwelt in,  
'Twill fail to inspire me with passion to  
roam;  
One moment's reflection would bring to my  
memory  
The scenes that surround my rude cottage  
home.

Sing on, little birds, think not I would harm  
you,  
Nay, flit not away as I rise to depart;  
Though dark, gloomy thoughts through my  
mind oft will hover,  
You still hold a place in the depth of my  
heart.

Blow on, ye light winds, but with soft, gentle  
pressure,  
Steal silently down where the red daisies  
grow;  
Kiss the brows of the beautiful green hill of  
Cheshire,  
The pride of our village, our dear Werneth  
Low.

Adieu, lovely spot, for a time I must leave  
thee,  
Yet will this last hope in my bosom remain,  
Ere winter a snowy white garland shall weave  
thee,  
I may feast on thy rich glowing beauties  
again.

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#### XLVI.

##### MISS S. A. HEGINBOTHAM, THE WERNETH POETESS.

Sarah Ann Heginbotham is a native of Gee Cross, and deserves to rank high in the list of the worthies of that village. At the age of eleven years she was sent to the mill to become a weaver, an occupation in which she is still engaged. Her spare time and energies have, however, been unselfishly devoted to service on behalf of her fellow-beings. For nearly 30 years she has been a Sunday School teacher at Gee Cross, where she founded, along with other temperance workers, a successful Band of Hope; her name also figured among the initiators of the Hyde and Hadfield Weavers' Winders, and Warpers' Union. As an advocate of the rights of women, Miss Heginbotham has been very active, for besides being a member of the Textile and other workers Representation Committee, she was sent to London as a delegate on behalf of the workers, and as such spoke at a large meeting in Chelsea Town Hall. From childhood Miss Heginbotham has been

interested in literature, and under the nom-de-plume of "Werneth," contributes poems and prose sketches to the local press. Her poetry is far above the average for merit, and its worth was publicly recognised when she carried off the prize for poetry at the first Hyde Eistedfodd, in 1—, by a beautiful poem on Werneth Low. All her work is of a high standard, and if preserved, as it ought to be, in book form, would win for her a lasting fame as one of the best of the Cheshire local poets. Her prose includes articles descriptive of the scenery of the Peak; and a series of articles on local folk-lore, entitled "My Granny's Legends." The following poem, although perhaps not her best, is nevertheless a fair example of a style in which she excels:—

A SABBATH MORN SPENT IN HYDE  
CHAPEL, GEE CROSS.

(March 22nd, 1885).

That morn the sunbeams flickered down  
On chancel steps and altar,  
Then o'er the pews and down the aisles,  
And then they seemed to falter  
Just where the lofty organ stands,  
And throws its shadow round,  
It seemed as though the sunbeams paused  
To catch the mellow sound.

The anthem was an old, old psalm,  
That many a sorrow lightened;  
That many a weary heart has cheered,  
And many a pathway brightened.  
The singer's hearts, the singer's lips  
Seemed moved by inspiration,  
And with the closing psalm our hearts  
Were raised in adoration.

And then the preacher's manly voice  
In rich full tones was heard;  
And O, there seemed to be a power  
Beyond his simplest word.  
He told us how at earthly shrines,  
Departed spirits meet  
The loved ones they have left below,  
And hold communion sweet,

And many a cheering word he spoke  
 To lift the mourner up.  
 And as he prayed the strength seemed given  
 To drink the bitter cup.  
 His task was o'er, and while our minds  
 Upon his words were dwelling,  
 There came sweet music from behind  
 In billows round us swelling.

Up through the lofty vaulted roof,  
 The organ's tones went ringing;  
 They seemed to go right up to heaven,  
 Then back, and with them bringing  
 A blessing from the father's hand,  
 That fell like dew on flowers,  
 And fear and doubt and strife all fled,  
 And peace again was ours.

The trembling strains then died away  
 Like sobs of sorrow's daughters,  
 Then back in ebbing strains they rolled,  
 Like the rush of spring-tide waters;  
 And then a rich full strain there came,  
 Which only spoke of peace;  
 And in the holy calm that fell  
 The sacred music ceased.

The prayers were said, we left the pile  
 With heavy loads grown lighter;  
 Again we saw the Father's smile,  
 And earthly hopes grew brighter.  
 For deep within our inmost hearts  
 Were purer feelings born,  
 And oh, we blessed the influence sweet,  
 Of that holy sabbath morn.

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## XLVII.

### GEORGE TAYLOR, OF HYDE.

This writer is a native of Hyde, and received his education at St. Thomas' School, after which, at the age of 12 years, he was put to work in a foundry. From boyhood his spare cash was devoted to the purchase of books, and he devoted much of his time to Sunday School and Band of Hope work at Union Street Chapel. It was the necessity of supplying a variety to the Band of Hope recitations that led him to embark in poetical composition. For over 20 years Mr. Taylor

has been a contributor to the poetical columns of the local press. He is the author of that famous ballad—"The Church Street Ghost." The following lines are from his pen:

### BEAUTIFUL MAY.

I have come, dear friend, I have come at last:  
You may bid farewell to the wintry blast;  
You'll find me on mountain, in valley and  
plain,  
O, cottager, come now and greet me again.

The lark, what a welcome he gives unto me,  
As he wings through the air with his sweet  
melody;  
Each morn as he rises and looks on the green,  
He truly beholds a more beautiful scene.

I've come, and the thrush, with his beautiful  
song,  
Is heard to re-echo now all the day long;  
Come, list unto him, his notes are so clear;  
If you are downhearted, he'll certainly cheer.

Come, list to the linnet, who sings on the tree,  
A most beautiful song for you and for me;  
He never seems weary from morning till eve;  
He welcomes me more than them all, I  
believe.

I have come; and the brooklet that dances  
along  
The mountains and valleys and plains has its  
song;  
It cheers the wild swallow as o'er it she goes,  
And dips to the music as onward it flows.

I come and bring flowers that should be the  
pride  
Of the sick and the wounded, as well as the  
bride;  
They fill all the air with the sweetest perfume,  
Oh, pluck them not, friend, or they'll fade in  
their bloom.

I've come, and the meadows and hedges and  
trees  
I fill with sweet music. I blow a slight breeze;  
Long, long they wait for me, and all seem to  
say  
They rightly do name me Beautiful May.

## XLVIII.

J A M E S      L E I G H  
(THE HYDE POET).

James Leigh holds a conspicuous place in the ranks of that school of writers commonly styled—"Lancashire Bards." The reason of his popularity is easily explained: he is essentially a "poet of the people"—a bard who views things from the standpoint of the homely cottage folk among whom the greater portion of his life has been spent; and he sings his songs in a language they can understand. Moreover, the quality of his productions, being far above the average standard of the working-class muse of his day, has won for him a host of readers in the thickly-populated centres which surround his native town.

Mr. Leigh was born in 1854, at Walker Fold, Hyde, and at the early age of eight years went to work half-time as a piccer at the mill. When he had attained the age of ten years he left school entirely. With the exception of an interval of six years, during which he worked as a mason, he continued to act as a cotton operative—working at Slack Mills, Hyde, until the year 1886, when he finally left the mill and commenced a grocery business in Ridling Lane, Hyde. To the last-named trade he has since added that of coal dealer and general carrier. Mr. Leigh was still a piccer in the mill, and only fourteen years of age, when his first poem appeared in the columns of the "Ashton Reporter." Since that time he has continued to publish verse, and is well-known as a contributor to the local press and to other largely read Lancashire journals. The subjects treated by him have been varied. In

a fine series of poems on the seasons he gives us some pictures of country life that deserve to live; and his songs descriptive of local scenery will hold their own with the work of any of his contemporaries. Of the class last mentioned is his song on

W E R N E T H      L O W.

Once more do I roam o'er thy heights,  
Werneth Low;  
And as I look down in the valley below,  
I think to myself there is naught half so  
grand,  
As the hills and the vales of my own native  
land.

Bobby Burns—he has sung of the banks and  
the braes  
Of his own “Bonny Doon,” and to him be all  
praise;  
But as dear unto me, in the valley below,  
Are the banks and the braes of my own  
Etherow.

And could I but sing like old Scotland’s bard—  
Like Burns, who for glory and fame struggled  
hard—  
From Poesy’s harp such a lay would I fling  
That, in praise of those valleys, I’d make the  
land ring.

I have roamed o'er those heights when the  
spirit of Spring  
Fanned gently my cheek with her soft, balmy  
wing;  
When the voice of great Nature was shouting  
for joy,  
From the vales to the hills, from the hills to  
the sky.

I have roamed o'er these heights when the  
flower-spangled sod  
Told of the marvellous power of God;  
When the lark was on high, and, with song  
loud and clear,  
Proclaimed to the skies that bright Summer  
was here.

I have roamed o'er these heights when Autumn  
once more  
Brought forth for God’s creatures her wonder-  
ful store;  
Whilst down in the woodland, quite clear  
could be heard  
The rich, mellow song of the bonnie blackbird.

I have roamed o'er these heights when  
 Winter's rude form  
 Swept o'er the land on the wings of the  
 storm—  
 When the streams in the valley, and out on  
 the plains,  
 Were bound to their beds by his cold, icy  
 chains.

But, Winter or Autumn, bright Summer or  
 Spring,  
 Enjoyment to me every season doth bring.  
 No matter the season in which I roam here,  
 Both season and scene are to me ever dear.

Dear hill of my childhood, my own Werneth  
 Low,  
 Ere long thy proud head may be covered with  
 snow;  
 Then perchance if I live, I shall roam o'er thy  
 brow,  
 And muse on thy beauty as e'en I do now.

Ye woods and ye valleys, with streams run-  
 ning through,  
 Ye wild moorland hills, fast fading from view,  
 I'll now say adieu, for yon bright Orb of  
 Light  
 Is tingeing the West as he sinks from my  
 sight.

But e'er I depart, let me breathe forth a  
 prayer  
 To Him who created a prospect so fair;  
 For oh! who can gaze on so beauteous a scene  
 And refuse to believe there's a Being Supreme?

It is, however, as a writer of Lancashire  
 verse that James Leigh excels, and in depicting  
 scenes and incidents from the humorous  
 side of local life, he is peculiarly at his best.  
 But his Lancashire verse is not all devoted to  
 the humorous strain. He touches the right  
 ring of pathos in many of his dialect pieces.  
 I know of nothing finer in Lancashire dialect  
 poetry than his

“IN MEMORIAM OF BEN BRIERLEY.”  
 Owd Ab's gone whoam, his shuttle's stopt at  
 last,  
 Th' owd loom-heause wears a drear, deserted  
 look;  
 O'er Walmsley Fowt a heavy gloom is cast,  
 Th' owd rib sits mournin' in her chimney  
 nook.

Deep sorrow reigns i' every heause i'th' fowt;  
 O' th' neighbours talk i' whispers, sad and  
 low;  
 An' even th' childer cease the'r joyous shout—  
 They seem to feel and share the heavy blow.

Jim Thuston mourns an' rambles reawnd th'  
 owd place,  
 An' wonders why sich things should come  
 aabeaut;  
 Whilst many tears are tricklin' deawn his  
 face,  
 He feels as though life's lamp had just gone  
 eawt.

Poor Jack o' Flunters ses 'twill noan bi lung  
 Before he follows in his owd friend's track;  
 He ses ut death, that wrestler stern and strong,  
 He feels ere lung will throw him on his back.

Down at th' owd Bell owd croneys sit and  
 smook,  
 An' tawk of one beloved (as owd Ab wur),  
 Whilst o'er each face there steals a wistful  
 look,  
 Wi' every foot that enters in at th' dur.

Owd Ab's gone whoam, his clogs are laid aside,  
 Th' last of a pure and high-souled minstrel  
 band;  
 The weaver minstrel was our joy and pride—  
 He swept his harp with perfect master hand.

Farewell! owd brid! thi warblin' days are o'er,  
 Thy cheerful lays have gladdened many a  
 heart;  
 Thy genial face is gone for ever more,  
 Though we were loth with thee, owd friend,  
 to part.

But now thy soul fro' earth its flight has took,  
 Let's hope when death coes thy owd rib to  
 thee  
 That up above yo'll find a Daisy Nook,  
 Wherein to dwell thro' all eternity.

Little wonder that the above has found a  
 warm place in the hearts of all lovers of the  
 old-fashioned Lancashire life so ably depicted  
 by Ben Brierley.

Mr. Leigh is very popular as a Lancashire  
 reciter and humorist, and his services in this  
 capacity have for years been ungrudgingly

given in aid of local charities. More fortunate than many local writers, he received public recognition of his efforts whilst still in the land of the living, for in October, 1904, a reception was given in his honour by His Worship the Mayor of Hyde (Walter Ingram Sherry, Esq., J.P.), at the Town Hall, Hyde; and he was then presented with an illuminated address. The Mayor of Hyde at the same time inaugurated a movement for raising funds for the publication of Leigh's poems in book form, with the result that a collection of his best pieces was issued as a quarto volume under the title "Gleams of Sunshine, and other Poems."

The present writer, who has enjoyed Mr. Leigh's friendship for many years, was one of the Secretaries of the Mayor's Committee, and can truthfully say that no local movement ever met with a wider welcome or more generous response. In a few weeks nearly 900 names of subscribers had been voluntarily sent to the Committee—a splendid testimony to the respect and esteem in which James Leigh is held by his fellow-citizens. Perhaps no more fitting conclusion to this article can be found than the lines addressed to a brother bard, in which Mr. Leigh gives utterance to the simple faith which has been a governing factor in his own life, and the spirit of which men of all ranks and classes would do well to follow.

This world to me's a woodland fair,  
I' every bush and tree  
Aw hear some sort o' singing brid  
Wi' sweeter song than me.

Yet there is just one sylvan spot,  
One quiet, snug retreat,  
Wheer aw con twitter forth wi' joy  
My feeble, faint pee-weet.  
An' weel aw know mi humble song  
To some great pleasure gives,  
So thee bi same as me, owd brid,  
An' twitter while theau lives.

## XLIX.

## JOHN WILLIAM DUNCAN BARRON.

It is possible that the thousands of people to whom Mr. Barron's name is quite familiar, have no idea that he has ever figured in the role of a poet,—so much has his career as a politician overshadowed his performances with the pen. For all that, no account of the local poets and song writers of East Cheshire would be complete without some mention of this versatile gentleman. Born at Manchester in 1861, he became noted as a public lecturer at the early age of 15 years, and was soon recognised as one of the foremost debaters in the country. As a speaker for the Conservative party he was invited to address meetings in all parts of the country; and has often been pressed to stand as a parliamentary candidate. On becoming Conservative agent at Hyde in 1887, he settled in that town; and is to-day one of the most prominent figures in the borough. For over 16 years he has been on the Town Council, for 12 years he sat on the Cheshire County Council, and in 1905, and again in 1906, he was elected Mayor of Hyde. During the second year of his Mayoralty he enjoyed the distinction of being presented to the King at St. James' Palace. Mr Barron is also a magistrate, and an officer of the 4th V.B.C.R.

Mr. Barron's verse has mostly been contributed to the "North Cheshire Herald." One example of his more serious muse is given here:—

## IS THERE NO GOD?

Is there no God on whose Almighty power the  
faith of man can cling and twine  
As ivy to the walls of ancient fabric seasoned  
by the mighty hand of Time?  
No God to guide the weary pilgrim 'midst the  
encircling gloom of night,  
To raise him from the darkness of the tomb to  
heaven's most glorious light?

Is there no God to whom the aged Christian's  
prayers ascend,  
When with his heart in grief bowed down he  
seeks God as his friend?  
No God to answer prayers for strength in  
trials to come?  
No hand the crown of life to give, no voice to  
say: "Well done!"

Is there no God into whose keeping, day by  
day, we give  
The mighty power of life, of death—in whom  
we move and live?  
No God to help the weary, and to point the  
dangers on life's dark, uncertain way,  
And raise the fallen from the darkness of  
eternal night to brightness of celestial  
day?

Yes, God there is, no matter who may doubt  
His mighty power,  
His works do manifest Himself each year,  
each day, each hour.  
And yet tho' Judge of judges, He, yea, King of  
kings, and all,  
Oft in mercy stoops to lift the poorest when  
they fall.

There is a God, for doth not Nature demon-  
strate His majesty and might?  
The stars that twinkle, and the sun, whose  
glorious rays do fill the world with light;  
Again, the earth doth prove His power, the  
firmament, and sea;  
Each tiny blade of grass, the smallest flower,  
all prove that God must be.

The seasons with their gradual change from  
summer's heat to winter's snow,  
The morn, the noon, the night, yea, life itself,  
all clearly show;  
And many who this world's rough, dark, un-  
even way have trod,  
Feel that Supreme the hand must be to rule—  
and He who rules is God.



## L.

MISS SUSANNA BENSON,  
OF BREDEURY.

This lady was born at 10, Granby Row, Manchester, on January 22nd, 1836, and was the younger daughter of Edward Benson, artist, who died in 1863. After her father's death, Miss Benson and her sister conducted a successful private school, but the Education Act of 1870 greatly interfered with this, as with many other similar ventures. Ultimately the Misses Benson removed to Bredbury in 1890, and lived in George-lane until 1906, when, her sister having died, the poetess removed to 13, Park-street, Bents-lane. Susanna Benson has written verse from childhood: the subjects treated by her are varied, but the moral of all her work is good. The cost attending book publication has hitherto prevented Miss Benson issuing her work in book form. This is a matter for regret, as her many pieces would make a pleasant and instructive volume. A fair example of her work is the poem entitled

## THE VICTORIA DISASTER.

Written after reading of the loss of H.M.S. Victoria in the Mediterranean, with upwards of 400 of her crew, including Admiral Tryon, June 22nd, 1893.

Where be thy sons, Britannia renown'd?  
Where be the phalanx of grave and gay?  
Under the ocean where treasures abound—  
Dark was the entrance that leadeth to day.

Treasures of ocean are many and fair,  
Wealth of the deep is a mine that's untold;  
Treasures of earth and of ocean are there,  
Spoil of our country—unvalu'd by gold.

Manhood in pow'r, and youth in its strength,  
Lie there awaiting the voice of the King;  
Grave of four hundred, unmeasur'd in  
length,  
Unhewn and undug is the tomb that we  
sing.

Deep o'er their bodies the ocean doth roll,  
Doing the will of the Master above,  
All graven deep in eternity's scroll,  
Kept in the grasp of the God who is love.

Leave we the brave as treasures of ocean,  
Cared for by heaven, but taken from earth;  
Comfort for mourners, 'midst the commo-  
tion,  
God is our shield from the hour of our  
birth.

## LI.

SAMUEL HILL,  
THE BARD OF STALYBRIDGE.

Most of the modern Lancashire bards write for the present day rather than for posterity, and, generally, their works go no farther than the poet's corner of the local paper. But there are a few of finer ore, whose collected works have won their way to the dignity of book form, and whose volumes may be found in well-thumbed condition among the literary treasures of many a working-class family. Samuel Hill, the Bard of Stalybridge, belongs to this last-named class of Lancashire writers. He is a dialect rhymster and prose writer whose works have found a ready sale in Lancashire, and in the factory districts of Cheshire, Yorkshire, and Derbyshire. Born at Stalybridge, on June 27th, 1864, Mr. Hill first worked at the Clayton Vale Printworks, but later was apprenticed to machine joinering with Taylor, Lang, and Co., Stalybridge, where he afterwards worked as a journeyman. For some years he assisted his father in the business of "Screw Bolt Making," but subsequently went into the theatrical profession as stage carpenter and scene painter, and was resident stage-manager at the Theatre Royal, Macclesfield; Theatre Royal, Birkenhead; Operetta House,

Rhyl; Opera House, Coventry; Royal Muncaster Theatre, Bootle; Metropole Theatre, Openshaw; and Queen's Theatre, Longton. He also travelled with several first-class companies as chief machinist; and in this way visited many of the principal towns and cities in the kingdom. During all his wanderings he wrote verse, and prose sketches, and in 1898, published a small book entitled "Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers." This was followed by "Lancashire Poets and their Poems" (1899); —a book of poems entitled "Foirewood, or Splinters and Shavin's fro' a Carpenter's Bench" (1902); "Local Poets of the Past" (1905), "Little Spadger's Dog, and other Sketches" (1906), "Old Lancashire Songs and their Singers"—second issue (1906). In addition to the above, he has the following works in MSS: "A Collection of Local Historical and Biographical Data"; "A Compilation of Masonic Songs, Odes, Toasts, Sentiments, Anecdotes," etc.; "Odds and Ends, or Whisperings fro' a Lancashire Broo-side"; "The Smithy low Papers"; "Miscellaneous Poems and Sketches, in the dialect of South-East Lancashire"; and (now in writing) "Without the Limelight, or Leaves from the Diary of a Theatrical Stage Carpenter." Mr. Hill is also well-known as a popular reciter and lecturer.

As a poet, our subject is first and foremost a dialect writer, and there are few who have depicted with greater ability, old Lancashire life and character. One of the most touching poems in the dialect in his piece—

**TH' EDGE O' DARK—OR "OWD ANVIL'S PRAYER."**

Owd Anvil lean'd o'er th' ceaw-lone gate,  
As th' day'eend faded into neet,  
An' th' twileet's shadows deepened reawnd,  
For th' sun had long bin eawt o' seet.

A hazy glimmering just o'er th' ridge  
 Proclaimed "the rising of the moon,"  
 Whoile toothry stars, loike diamonds breet,  
 Twinkle't i' th' firmament aboon.

A bonny neet, so calm an' still,  
 Just brokken neaw an' then by th' seawnd  
 O' toir't footsteps ploddin' on—  
 Some honest toiler, homeward beawnd.

O' th' world seemed sinkin' to repose,  
 As if fagged eawt by th' long day's wark,  
 An' drowsy feelin's grew apace,  
 An' filled one's breast—'twur th' edge o' dark.

Neet-buzzarts flitted to an' fro,  
 An' beetles buzz'd an' wheel'd o'er th' edge,  
 A bat coom whizzin' straight deawn th' lone,  
 A tooad scrawl't throo' th' brooklet's sedge.

And then, when the country surroundings  
 have all been described, comes the simple,  
 touching prayer of the rough, untutored old  
 toiler, who is nearing the eventide of life:—

"Oh, Theau who made o' th' universe,  
 Just hearken fro' Thy throne aboon;  
 Con't find a seat for one loike me?  
 Becose, Theau knows aw'st want one soon.

Theau's bin my staff an' comfort long;  
 Theau's helped me through my hopes an'  
 fears;  
 An' eh! aw should loike t' come to Thee—  
 Aw dunnot want to go deawnsteers.

Just look Thy ledger o'er an' see—  
 Aw know aw've bin a wayward lad—  
 Bur see heaw th' balance stonds, an' then  
 Say, have aw done moor good nor bad.

Theau'l have it o' i' black an' white;  
 If th' time-sheet's wrong, no blamin' th'  
 clark,  
 Just stretch a point or two, neaw do—  
 Abide wi' me, it's th' edge o' dark."

That some of the old-fashioned worthies of  
 the neighbourhood have been immortalised by  
 him may be gathered from his poem

## PISTON ROD.

Owd Piston-Rod wur straight an' true,  
 An' never hung his yed;  
 Un' yo' could write yo're davy on't,  
 He meant o' 'ut he said.  
 No shiffle-shaffle wark wi' him,  
 Becose it wouldna' fit;  
 No "Hum! yo'd better co again,"  
 Or "See me in a bit."

He wur a pattern 'beawt a flaw,  
 One 'twould be hard to match;  
 No trickster full o' quips an' quirks,  
 'Ut's awlus upo' th' snatch.  
 He tender'd no two-shilling' piece  
 When th' price wur hauve-a-creawn,  
 Nor trod a foeman's finger-eends  
 Who happen'd to be deawn.

Owd Piston-Rod looked reight to th' front,  
 Wi' gaze stern an' unshrinkin';  
 He'd face a fact, not turn aside,  
 Nor set his een a-blinkin'.  
 Straight up an' deawn his motto wur,  
 He work'd it eawt to th' letter:  
 "What has bin done con still be done,"  
 An' none knew th' truth on't better.

He're awmust six feet hee, aw'm sure,  
 As wiry as a willow;  
 Loike an owd weather-beaten hulk,  
 He breasted every billow.  
 Few friends he made 'mong th' younger  
 eend.  
 Thoose who approach'd wur bowd 'uns;  
 Yet, tho' he're chary wi' new friends,  
 He ne'er forgeet his owd 'uns.

But great though Mr. Hill's claims are to remembrance as a bard, he will probably win greater fame by reason of his efforts as a preserver of old Lancashire literature. With a patience and resolution that is rarely seen, he has rescued from oblivion, and placed in what may be regarded as a permanent form, some of the gems of Lancashire verse. Some day his labours in this direction will win that meed of recognition and praise which they certainly deserve.

## LII.

## ARTHUR WILLIAMSON, OF HYDE.

Mr. Williamson is better known as a successful Trades Union Leader than as a poet, and his life has been of the practical order. Born at Glossop in 1864, he was, at the age of 5 years, taken by his parents to reside at Hyde, but three years later the family removed to Hollingworth, and whilst living here our subject commenced work at Dalton's bleachworks, where he met with a severe scalding accident, and was then sent to work as a half-time "little piecer" at the Waterside Mills, Hadfield. As the mills were  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant from his home, and the lad had to walk to and from his work, he had little chance of acquiring an education, and it is principally to his own grit and efforts at self-tuition that Mr. Williamson owes his present extensive knowledge. As far back as 1878 Mr. Williamson became a member of his Trades Union; and after acting for some time as Chairman of the Spinners' Association, he was appointed to the important post of Secretary in succession to the late Mr. Higginbottom. From that period he has resided in Hyde. His work as an organiser, and his ready tact, have stamped him as one of the most successful Trades Union Leaders of the district. In other ways, his life has been busy and useful. He is a prominent worker at the Zion Sunday School, Hyde, and has done excellent work as a member of the Hyde Town Council. Bad health caused him to retire from the Council in 1906, but he is still active in promoting many philanthropic objects.

Mr. Williamson formerly contributed to the "Cotton Factory Times," and other journals. His best verse is in the dialect, but he has

also written in ordinary English,—“An ode to the Longendale Valley” and other poems. His dialect pieces are mostly humorous, and the following is given as a specimen:

SOFT SAM, OR HEAW AW BEGUN A  
COURTIN’.

Aw've begun o' courtin', did yo' know?  
Aw go wi' Sally Brown;  
Her mother keeps a penny show,  
Ut stands just deawn i'th' teawn.  
Hoo is a bonny lass, is Sall,  
Her cheeks are like a rose—  
What mak's her still a Prattier gal—  
Hoo's such a lovely nose.

It stands out like a barber's pow,  
It curls a bit at th' end;  
It's not like some o'th' noses, neaw,  
It's one ut' winno bend.  
Hoo's t' nicest pair of dark brown een  
Ut ever yo' did see;  
There's one could look behind that scene,  
While t'other's mashin' me.

Her hair un feet are made to match,  
When hoo's washed, hoo does look well;  
Un then you know hoo wears a watch,  
Hoo fairly is a swell.  
There's lots o' young chaps envies me,  
Because aw've won, yo' know;  
And then, some day, I hope to be  
Boss o' that penny show.

Now, aw'll tell yo' heaw aw let o' Sal,  
If you winno tell agen;  
Fer there's lots o' chaps want know it,  
Especially one co'ed Ben.  
Aw happen go to'th' fair one neet,  
Un aw stood ut front o't show,  
An' watched performers dance a bit,  
Un sing a bit, un o.

Aw'd non stood theer so very lung,  
When aw spied this pratty wench;  
Un altho' aw'm only very young,  
Mi' thowts were fairly clenched;  
When th' act were o'er, aw stood i'th' dur,  
Un waited till hoo coom,  
Aw said—“Eh, Sal, mi lass, wheer't fur,  
Wilt goo i'th' pay saloon?”

Aw'll buy thi a hawpoth o' marrow-fats,  
 Un chips un pays beside;  
 If tha winno go with another chap,  
 Aw'll ha' thi for my bride.  
 Tha mun say "ay," or else aw'st dee,  
 My heart will break i' two;  
 Un then they'd ha for't bury me,  
 Un THAT would be a "do."

Said Sal—"Aw luv thi, Sam, aw do,"  
 Un then hoo took mi hond.  
 Un said us aw wur th' biggest foo  
 Us ther wer i' all the lond.  
 Un that's heaw aw did the deed that neet,  
 Un a nobie deed it wur,  
 For Sally, hoo has great big feet,  
 Un hoo met a punced me slap through th' dur.

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## LIII

## SAMUEL SCOTT SUDLOW.

Mr. Sudlow, who is a native of Delamere Forest, was born in 1865, and settled in Hyde in 1881. By trade he is a joiner, but is widely known as an artist of great ability. He was a winner of one of the Ashton Scholarships at the Hyde Mechanics' Institute, and afterwards attended the School of Art, Manchester, where he won nine certificates, and the Queen's Prize for drawing from plant life. Not being satisfied with the tuition imparted at the School of Art, he threw up the scholarship, and became a student under Mr. E. B. Walker. Later he was elected a student of the Manchester Academy, and has exhibited at the Mosley Street Galleries both portrait and landscape works. His work as an artist is highly spoken of by those competent to judge, and he is one of the very few local men who have been successful as a portrait painter. As a writer of verse Mr. Sudlow is not so well-known, principally because he has not published much. But his lines are good, and the poem quoted below will

take a high place in local verse. He is a keen lover of nature, from which his poetic inspiration is directly drawn.

TO THE BLUE BELL.

Thou modest plant, whose stem so frail  
Seems scarcely built to stand the gale;  
Why dost thou coyly hang thine head  
Like maiden shy,—or is it dread?

Art thou afraid that clumsy feet  
Will wanton raid thy sweet retreat  
And ruthless tread thy life away,  
Ere thou has lived a summer's day?

Perhaps thou dost thine head incline,  
To watch the dew drops as they shine,  
And sparkle in that gleam of light  
That now comes flashing on my sight.

I see thee nod, and tremble, too,  
As if some lover came to woo;  
Is it the zephyr's amorous sigh  
That moves thee as he passes by?

Or is there in that gleam of light  
Some frolicsome mischievous sprite,  
That doth delight to plague and tease,  
And shake thee so to baulk the bees

And other insects of the dell  
That seek to rest them on thy bell?  
Perhaps thou dost sleep, for who can say  
What happens at the close of day?

Here, no doubt, in the bright moonlight,  
Fairy and elf and gnome and sprite,  
Frolic and sport and dance with glee  
To merry music made by thee.

To this last thought my mind doth cling,  
For here I see a wondrous thing,  
A fairy fabric, rich and rare,  
Right o'er thy head is stretched with care.

'Tis slung to poles of emerald hue,  
And decked with diamonds made from dew,  
This 'broidered web was surely planned  
Right in the heart of fairyland.

Its dainty film, no doubt, was spun  
To screen thee from the blazing sun,  
And keep aloof the buzzing bees,  
While thou dost nod and doze at ease.

Those blades of grass on every hand  
Like guards of honour round thee stand,  
And wildly wave their pointed spears  
When any foe of thine appears.

To see thee blooming here like this,  
In native worth, to me is bliss;  
To have thee plucked and thrown away  
Would fill my heart with dire dismay.

Sleep on, in this secluded glade,  
Thou hast not need to be afraid,  
My pleasure is the power to see  
And feel the beauty shown to me.

## LIV.

## MISS HARRIET WARHURST.

A native of Compstall, Miss Warhurst came to reside at Hyde when about 16 years of age, and has distinguished herself as a Sunday School teacher at St. Andrew's Church, Hyde, and at St. John's Church, Godley; and at the present time is not only a Sunday School teacher, but also a member of the choir at Godley Church. She first published verse in the Band of Kindness column of the "North Cheshire Herald" in 1883, when she was quite a girl, and has frequently contributed poems to that paper. One of her poems won a prize in "Melia's Magazine," and other examples of her muse have been highly spoken of by the critic of "Great Thoughts." She is a great lover of nature, and her subjects include "Twilight," "Spring," "A Child's Love," "The Skylark," "A wish," etc. One of Miss Warhurst's most successful pieces is the one here given on her native village of Compstall:

## THE VILLAGE OF COMPSTALL.

(Suggested upon Viewing it from Werneth Low.)

Dear home!  
Where first I saw the light of day,  
And passed my childhood's hours away,  
In innocent and guileless play.

I love thee!  
To me thou art a place of rest,  
A scene that's pictured in my breast,  
With all that's beautiful. The best  
And dearest!

## What joy!

To see the dear old home once more;  
And in my fancy's mind explore  
The happy scenes and haunts of yore  
Before me.

To let my eyes, for one brief spell,  
Roam over moorland, hill, and dell,  
Is joy indeed. Tongue cannot tell  
The pleasure.

## Ye woods—

Ah, me! what happy, happy hours  
I've spent beneath your shady bowers,  
Seeking the lovely woodland flowers—  
Earth's treasures.

The hyacinth, with bells of blue;  
The primrose, with the golden hue;  
And modest violets, wet with dew,  
I gathered.

## I see,

In fancy's mind, the sheltered spot,  
Where bloomed the sweet forget-me-not;  
It was to me a fairy grot;

## In summer,

Close by a brooklet's mossy bed,  
Each raised its azure-tinted head;  
While birdlings warbled overhead  
Sweet music.

## Ye fields!

Where from her nest amid the corn,  
The lark springs forth at early morn,  
And to the wanderer's ear is borne  
Melody.  
When earth dons on her robe of flowers,  
And days glide on in sunny hours,  
Heaven seems to smile as earth she dowers  
With plenty.

## Ye meads!

Where daisies smile beneath the feet,  
'Mid clover and the meadow-sweet,  
And busy bees haste forth to greet  
The flowers.

How oft have I—a happy child—  
The summer's laughing hours beguiled  
Amid yon fields, when nature smiled  
With beauty!

## And you,

Ye mighty hills that round me rise!—  
Whose summits seem to touch the skies—  
I love to feast my weary eyes  
Upon you.

Ye smiling hills! ye make me glow  
With happiness! I love ye so!  
But thou, to me, sweet Werneth Lowe,  
Art dearest.

How sweet  
 To climb thy brow at break of day!  
 And hear the skylark's matin lay,  
 And watch the mists that roll awav  
 In silence!  
 Revealing to the eye a scene  
 Of wondrous beauty, tint, and sheen,  
 Beyond the painter's wildest dream  
 Or labour.

I hear  
 A weird sound! 'Tis the Etherow  
 That murmurs in the vale below;  
 Its waters seem to flash and glow  
 Like jewels!  
 And yonder, hidden from my search,  
 By gloomy pine, and stately birch,  
 Is holy ground—the Village Church—  
 God's acre.

Dear home!  
 Whose happy haunts I love to trace,  
 Thou holds't within my heart a place  
 That time nor fortune can efface  
 From memory!  
 Adieu! dear home! Thy charms impart  
 A soothing influence on my heart—  
 Fair nature's book; to me thou art  
 A blessing!

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LV.

H E N R Y      H Y D E.

Henry Hyde was born in Gerrards Hollow, Gee Cross, on August 14th, 1871, and is the son of working parents, his father being an overseer for weavers, and his mother a weaver. He received his education at the village school, and at eleven years of age worked half-time at a cork manufacturer's in Gee Cross, and at the age of 13 left school to work full time. Having acquired a knowledge of the leather trade at Messrs. North's works, Hyde, and having spent some time in this business in London, he ultimately procured a situation at Messrs. North's, where he still works. Mr. Hyde began to write verse when

about 16 years of age, his first attempt being  
 A SONNET ON THE DEATH OF B. J.  
 WILLIAMSON,  
 SCHOOLMASTER AT HYDE CHAPEL  
 SCHOOLS, GEE CROSS.

Now sleep for ever in the silent grave:  
 Nor shall wild Winter's storm disturb thy rest.  
 Thou wert a man, but the great God knew best  
 That which for thee was good. As He can save  
 A sinking vessel from the ocean wave,  
 So has He saved thy spirit to be blest;  
 To join in holy chorus, east or west,  
 The songs of praise which human minds ne'er  
 gave.

Knowledge and wisdom entered thy true soul,  
 And breathed the spirit of a high desire:  
 The light of Literature's undying fire  
 Didst thou cast forth from books of nature's  
 mine.

Among the names of men whom we adore,  
 Thine shall be one of them for evermore.

At seventeen Mr. Hyde wrote a play, partly historical and partly romantic, and during the next few years contributed short poems to the local press. A second play, mostly in blank verse, followed; and finally a lengthy poem, entitled "The Dwarf of Spain," which is an ambitious piece of considerable merit. Mr. Hyde, who now resides in Newton, Hyde, is at present engaged in preparing his poems, with selections from his dramatic pieces, for publication in book form. The following is an example of his shorter pieces:

T H E   B R O O K.

Mirror of all things of light!  
 Heaven's reflection streaming bright!  
 Charming spirit of the wild!  
 Nature's freeborn wandering child!  
 Thou art from the world above,  
 Sweet bewitcher of the grove,  
 Apt to wander from the throng,  
 Nature's solitudes among—  
 Where the soul finds wings to fly  
 And her greatest pleasures lie.  
 On thy winding pebbled way  
 Answering the sweet birds' lay,  
 With thy soft melodious voice  
 Bidding sadness to rejoice.  
 Thou art on a journey bent,  
 Rough as ever mortal went,  
 Joining first the rivers free,  
 Then, at last, thy grave, the sea.

## LVI.

## JOSEPH CRONSHAW.

This writer is essentially a Lancashire poet, but he has for years been closely connected by business ties with Hyde, and other Cheshire places, and his literary productions have appeared in the Cheshire press; so that he has especial claims to be ranked with the best known of the modern East Cheshire bards. Born at Newton Heath, on September 20th, 1857, he had little schooling, and at an early age was apprenticed to the guttapercha shoe trade. This occupation proving injurious to his health, he, whilst still a boy, set out to make a career for himself. With a handcart, he went out as a hawker, selling salt; then he became the owner of a donkey and cart, and thus working his way little by little, eventually became proprietor of the Onward Salt Wharf, Ancoats; and a marine-store and general dealer on a large scale. Mr. Cronshaw's career is a veritable romance, and ought to be written at length. It has been a battle against hardships and odds, but Mr. Cronshaw has won. Amid uncongenial circumstances his literary inclinations have always found vent. He is a born humorist, and has few equals as a reciter. And for years his poems and prose pieces have delighted thousands of readers in Lancashire and Cheshire. That he possesses the gifts of true poesy will be apparent to all who read the following lines, in which the author asks himself the question

## "AM I A POET"?

Now should I stroll out in the gay summer time,  
My heart fills with rapture at nature sublime—  
The hills and the valleys, the moorland and  
clough,  
And the clear rippling streams are subjects  
enough;  
Though lacking in poesy, I think it no crime  
To tell what I feel in a simple crude rhyme.

I'm fond of good music, the sweetest I've  
 heard  
 Salutes me in spring from the wild singing  
 bird—  
 The blackbird so sweet, and the throstle so  
 coy,  
 Respond to the notes of the lark in the sky;  
 And should it be winter, with snow or frost  
 rime,  
 The voice of the robin compels me to rhyme.

I'm fond of wild flowers that grow in the dell,  
 The daisy so modest, and the bonny blue bell—  
 Where the pale timid primrose peeps from  
 its nook,  
 And the foxglove so stately bows to the brook,  
 And the hawthorn so sweet, resplendent in  
 bloom,  
 Whilst the air is filled with fragrant perfume.

Vain critics may blame for the license I take,  
 When I tell of sweet maids, with fork and  
 hay rake,  
 And the reaper's refrain, so jolly and blythe,  
 Keeping time to the music of sickle and  
 scythe;  
 Though lacking in poesy, and my writings but  
 rhyme,  
 To the sickle and scythe my heart's keeping  
 time.

I'm thankful to God for these bright sunny  
 hours,  
 Spent in the woodlands, 'midst birds and wild  
 flowers;  
 For the cornfield and meadow, so plenteous in  
 wealth,  
 For raiment and food, and a store of good  
 health;  
 With a heart ever grateful, I think it sublime,  
 To praise my Creator in blank verse or rhyme.



## LVII.

J. MOULTON PARRY.

This writer not only enjoys the distinction of being the youngest, but he is also one of the most promising of the present-day poets of the neighbourhood. Born at Newton Wood, on February 5th, 1882, he lived for a time in Lukinfield, but now resides in Warrington-street, Ashton-under-Lyne. At the age of 14 he entered the Law Offices of John Clayton and Son, Solicitors, of Ashton-under-Lyne (now John Clayton, Son, and Wilson), and is still employed by this firm. The legal profession is not regarded as being conducive to the cultivation of the poetic art, but Mr. Parry does not allow his occupation to quench his natural love for the Muses, and during his leisure hours, has produced verse which has already won for him a high place in the ranks of local bards. He contributes to the "Manchester Evening Chronicle," the "North Cheshire Herald," and other well-known provincial papers, and also writes for the London press. Sometimes he uses the nom-de-plume of "Alpha," and at others, in collaboration with W. H. Parry, that of "Justitia." He is the author of several interesting prose sketches, and short stories. As a poet he is equally at home in the dialect or the ordinary tongue, and his subjects cover a wide range. For examples of his muse I quote two beautiful songs.

## OH, TAKE ME WHERE THE HEATHER BLOOMS.

Oh, take me where the heather blooms,  
 Beneath the smiling sky,  
 For when the breath of summer comes  
   I feel I cannot die;  
 My soul is yearning for the hills  
   And far-off meadows green,  
 And such a longing through me thrills  
   To tread those paths again.

When last I roamed the skylark's song  
 Was trembling from on high;  
 The zephyrs, perfumed, passed along,  
 The wild flowers seemed to sigh;  
 And, oh, what solitude was there,  
 As though the influence loved  
 To make the spot a place for prayer,  
 With all of sin removed.

I fain would walk those paths once more,  
 To watch the sun's first beam  
 Steal o'er the hill, and down the dale,  
 And tinge with gold the stream;  
 For then I might with earnest tone,  
 Whilst kneeling on the sod,  
 Lift up my earthly thoughts to Heaven,  
 And commune with my God.

But ne'er again my steps shall stray,  
 My heart will soon be cold,  
 My span of life has passed away,  
 With all its hopes untold,—  
 With all ambition left to sleep  
 Within the mouldering clay;  
 But I have faith in that blest bourne  
 Which knoweth not decay.

#### T H E     S O N G S T E R.

The songster's carol is wildly free,  
 And she singeth silvery clear;  
 And the joyous notes of her minstrelsy,  
 Which speak of a rapturous liberty,  
 Fall sweet on the listener's ear.

She steeps her wings in the sunlit blue,  
 And breasts the feathery cloud;  
 As though she soared the heavens to view  
 The home of the holy and pure and true,  
 Where the spirit is never bowed.

I have oft in the world some wisdom sought,  
 But angered have turned away—  
 To find a lesson more nobly taught,  
 A theme of gratitude grandly wrought  
 In the songster's adoring lay.



## LVIII.

## MISS MARY WALKER.

Born at Chinley, in Derbyshire, Miss Walker is a daughter of the late Alfred H. Walker, formerly of Mottram,—a gentleman who won some local distinction by his skill in versifying. She removed to Hyde about the year 1899, and now resides in Fountain-street, Godley; and is employed as a weaver at Messrs. Ashton's Mills, Flowery Field. Some time ago, she took an active part in Band of Hope work in Hyde. Her first efforts at rhyme were made when she was about 12 years of age, and since her residence in Hyde she has contributed largely to the local press. Her poems chiefly deal with events of local note, such as "The churhing of the Mayor," "Eawr Sarmons at Daisyfieldt," "Betty's Visit to Hyde," etc. A fair example of her style is the piece here quoted:

THE COTTON WORKER'S CRY OF  
DISTRESS.

The cry of the poor is a cry full of grief,  
For hunger is rampant and wages are brief,  
And scarcely a home but there's somebody ill  
Through want and distress, and no work at  
the mill.

For weeks, aye, for months, folks have earned  
less and less,  
Yet bravely have striven to manage their  
best,  
And hoped against hope that the times would  
soon mend  
Ere all their small savings had come to an  
end.

But alas! for their hope times have not  
mended as yet,  
And scores of poor toilers are plunged into  
debt;  
For body and soul must be just kept together,  
And children grow hungry this keen wintry  
weather,

But though poor they are proud, and would  
 scarce tell a friend  
 (They might tell an uncle, with money to  
 lend),  
 Of clothes that are gone, and the cupboard  
 grown bare,  
 And how they are brought to the verge of  
 despair.

Some people well fed treat it all as a joke,  
 No pity have they for the poor factory folk.  
 They should save up their cash, and in that  
 case they say—  
 They would need neither helping nor union  
 pay.

But I put it to you how a fellow who earns,  
 Say, a sovereign a week, and has two or three  
 bairns,  
 Perhaps a sick wife as well (tho' he works like  
 a slave),  
 When he's paid all his dues, can have money  
 to save?

So you that get plenty of pudding and beef  
 Don't scorn those that have to apply for relief;  
 Remember, Dame Fortune's a changeable elf,  
 And 'praps when she turns you may need it  
 yourself.

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### LIX.

#### MISS MARIA DOWNS.

Miss Downs is a dialect rhymster, whose effusions have been chiefly devoted to chronicling events of note connected with St. George's Church, Hyde. Her rhymes in sheet form have sold in large numbers, and in this way she has raised considerable sums for the benefit of the church funds. Miss Downs lives in Church Brow, Hyde. The following example of her work was written on the occasion of the "farewell tea" given when the Rev. Greville Pope—the blind curate of St. George's, was leaving the parish.

## MRS. POPE'S TEA.

Eawr Curate's wife has gan this tay,  
 Un hoo tells me, ut the're beawn  
 To l'ave us after New Year's day,  
 Un goo to London teawn.  
 Wist every one very much regret,  
 Ut thin had so short a stay,  
 Its nobbut 14 months since first we met  
 Un had the'r welcome tay.

Bur if their time has bin so'a brief  
 Thin sown good seed, I know,  
 For thin allus had a smile to greet,  
 Un a hond shake, fur us aw.  
 Un when thin sattled down ogen,  
 It centre of eawr nation,  
 Thil boath ha lots o' work to do,  
 To win souls for Christ's Salvation.

Un as th'ir going th'ir daily round,  
 Contented side by side,  
 I think I yer that welcome seaund,  
 "How are my friends at Hyde?"  
 For friends in heart wist allus be,  
 Un to show appreciation,  
 Win coom'd once moor, for't have us tay,  
 Un make this presentation.

It is no' allus t' costliest gift  
 Ut marks a friendly feeling,  
 Bur a willing mind, un prayers we lift,  
 For God's blessing while were kneeling,  
 Un when th'ir time cooms to a close,  
 To bid thir friends adieu,  
 Thil ne'er regret they coom to know  
 St. George's Church un Schoo'.

## LX.

## O R L A N D O   O L D H A M .

Mr. Oldham, who is one of the latest recruits to the ranks of local writers of verse, is 28 years of age, and is a native of Newton, where he still resides. His father, Thomas Oldham descends from the family of that name which has for several centuries been settled at Gee Cross. After an early training at the Flowery Field British School. Mr.

Orlando Oldham set about in earnest to fit himself for a business career, and has a record of success of which he may well feel proud. As a student at the Hyde and other Technical Schools, he reaped many laurels in the examinations held by the Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes, the Society of Arts, the London Chamber of Commerce, etc. He won scholarships granted at the Hyde Technical School, and by the Cheshire County Council, and the Union of Institutes. The Lord Derby Exhibition, the highest scholarship granted for commercial successes in evening schools, also fell to his lot, and under it, he attended evening classes at Owen's College, Manchester. He now holds the responsible position of Private Secretary to the Chairman of Directors of the firm of Richard Haworth and Co., Ltd., Manchester.

Mr. Oldham's appearance as a local poet was the result of an undertaking into which he entered, to supply a weekly column of Shaw Hall Notes to the "North Cheshire Herald." As news was scarce, he adopted the plan of writing dialect rhymes upon local subjects, and these became popular. His contributions have appeared under the nom-de-plumes of "Owd Giles," "Shee Ho," "O O," and "Roy." Mr. Oldham's intention is to devote his future efforts to more serious poems in ordinary English. So far the chief feature of his work has been his character delineation in the dialect; and the following fragment from his pen, will be recognised as a faithful likeness by those who know the original.

#### E A W R      V I C A R.

Aw dunno' quite know if ther's others like  
me,—  
Aw conno' read every chap's face;  
Bur when eawr Vicar gets deawn on his knee,  
His prayer seems fert fill mi wi' grace.

He nudge's one's memory, he tells yo' what's  
reet,

He denounces alike sin un shame;  
Bur still, like that bird, he knows heaw't bi  
breet,  
His work ther's nobody con blame.

His sermons are touchin', his words carry  
weight,

Un his love fer his flock is weel known,  
Bur he doesno' forget when it's wanted t' hit  
straight,  
Un he looks after't seed us he's sown.

If ther's one thing eawr Vicar becks up wi' a  
will,

It's tachin' God's word i' eawr skoos;  
Un woe to the chap us ud threaten fert kill  
Eawr Church skoos unt tachin' they choose.

If wi wanten fert have eawr childer go reet,  
Int' road us ther parents wer' shown,  
Wi'st a't show us strength, us well as bi breet,  
I' defendin' eawr Church un eawr own.

Well, that's road he spakes; it's eawr Vicar  
o'er,

Un wi'st stand to him neaw thick un thin;  
Un if things happen t' alter, un mek a furore,  
Like that brid wi'll mek a sweet din.

Neaw folks, tek a lesson fro't Vicar i' time,  
Stick up fer his gospel un creeds,  
Un if yo' conno express yo'r thouts i' a rhyme,  
Yo con beat it bi doin' good deeds.

## LXI

### MISS LUCY F. COCKS, OF ROMILEY.

Miss Cocks is a native of Bredbury, where she was born on February 19th, 1872; and is a daughter of Mr. John Cocks, now of "Brook-side," Romiley—a gentleman who has played an important part in the local government of his neighbourhood, and has also sat upon the Cheshire County Council. She was educated at a private boarding school, and in her 13th year began her career as an authoress by addressing some lines "to a history book"—the only companion of her quiet hours. It was

not until some years afterwards, however, that she began seriously to indulge in the writing of verse. She herself has thus outlined the steps that led her to authorship: "Studying rhyme, and the music of words, and methods used by other writers proved the first stepping stones to attempt. Nature, my Father and Mother, a friend, solitude, and even politics, have inspired me. "An English Rose" was written in twenty minutes, but others have taken hours to complete. I sometimes give myself a task to write in original rhyme about subjects not often spoken or written about, "The Forest Wind" being an example. "To write nothing base is my firm intention"—So good a judge of literary composition as Mr. Urwick, of Hatherlow, spoke high in praise of the verse written by Miss Cocks, which embraces such subjects as "Night in Chadkirk," "Mary Stuart," "Sunset in Chadkirk Vale," "To the Daisy," "To a Dead Friend," "The First Spring Song." The following are typical examples of her muse:

#### DAFFODILS.

On the broadlands, after winter,  
 When March winds blow cold and shrill,  
 Grows a cupola in saffron,  
 'Tis the yellow daffodil.  
 All a-noddin' and a-prancin',  
 Shaking as the breezes will,  
 In a golden gown a-dancin'  
 Bloom for ever! Daffodil.

Thou the pride of early springtide,  
 Of the meadows, vale, and hill,  
 Peeping over emerald grasses,  
 Fringing marshy lake and rill.  
 All a-growin' and a-blowin',  
 Hither, thither, to and fro,  
 Setting with thy welcome showin',  
 Half the country side aglow.

In a gorgeous gilded mantle,  
 After winter snows so gay,  
 That we almost scent the blossoms,  
 Waiting to unfold in May.  
 Swingin', every bell a-ringin',  
 Set by winds a tune for me,  
 Swayin', every eye delayin',  
 Daffodil, to look at thee!

When the sun's alluring brightness  
 Makes each bell a dazzling zone,  
 Tinting it with magic brightness  
 In a glory all its own,  
 Still a-prancin', still a-dancin',  
 In thy splendid gown and frill,  
 With a wildness sweet, entrancin',  
 Dance for ever, Daffodil !

## L'Envoi.

So the earth, from frostland slumbers,  
 Wakes in thee to find a voice,  
 Potent, for thy myriad numbers,  
 Bid the living world Rejoice !  
 Giving every blossom living  
 Bud and flower to one theme true,  
 We are passing, but true tokens,  
 Of God's providence to you.

## THE FOREST-WIND.

Dead leaves fallen are whirling in the breeze,  
 Dancing fantastic to some weird magic song;  
 'Tis thou, Forest-Wind, booming through the  
 trees,

In one wild triumph bearing them along.

Fast by the crystal rivulet's swift flow,  
 And on, and on, unmeasurable thy sway  
 O'er mead and down, no human foot can know  
 Thy highway regal, or dispute thy way,

On! here and there, whistling rampant in  
 speed!

What power can stay thy course! onward  
 thou must go—  
 Wind of productiveness blowing a seed  
 Into life-giving soil, warmed by the sun-  
 glow.

Unfettered wanderer, glorious, free,  
 Chaff and the servile dust before thee are  
 hurled  
 Out from their hiding place, driven by thee  
 Over the farthest boundary of the world.



## LXII.

## THOMAS MIDDLETON.

The following lines are from the pen of Mr. T. Middleton, the compiler of this book, a sketch of whose career is given in the appendix. Although laying no claim to poetic ability, he has written songs and rhymes upon various subjects, mostly suggested by local characters and events. One which has been set to music by a local composer, and has been sung with success in the district, is entitled—

## A SONG OF THE FORGE.

A blacksmith's life is the life for me,  
 With the rude forge for my hall,  
 Where the roaring flames leap wild and free,  
 And the mighty hammers fall;  
 Where the clang of iron is loud and shrill,  
 'Neath the blows of men all strong,  
 And the English heart feels the war-like  
 thrill  
 Of the ringing metal's song.

## Chorus.

For the anvils ring  
 With a ding-dong-ding,  
 As we beat the metal glowing,  
 And the gay sparks fly,  
 And the flames roar high,  
 Fore the bellow's lusty blowing.

The following fragment is taken from a lengthy piece written during the dark days of the South African War, as an answer to the voice of the foreign press which sought to belittle England and the English flag.

See yonder, high up in the heaven  
 There's a Union Jack unfurled,  
 Which this land to her sons has given  
 To carry in pride through the world.  
 And that flag is a thing consecrated  
 By the blood of a thousand years,—  
 By the deaths of the heroes fated—  
 By the ocean of England's tears.

And I tell you, liars—be steady—  
 That the old flag shall not wane,  
 For a million hearts are ready

In the free land of the main.  
 And as long as a son or daughter  
     Is left hale above the sod—  
 As long as there's land or water—  
     It shall fall to none but God.

The same writer has also written a collection of ballads and verse in the narrative style, dealing with the traditions and folk-lore of East Cheshire. Some of these are humorous, and the following extract is taken from his piece entitled:—

“THE DEVIL AND THE DOCTOR.”

A LEGEND OF LONGDENDALE.

The story runs that a Longdendale doctor entered into a compact with the Devil, by which he was bound to deliver himself up to Satan at a certain hour. When the time arrived, the Doctor entered into negotiations with the Devil, who agreed to ride a race with the Doctor, and to grant the latter his freedom in case he won. After graphically describing all the preliminaries the poem thus proceeds:

And so the race began, and fast  
 They galloped like some raging blast.  
 Swiftly the doctor rode that night,  
 His face set grim, his lips shut tight—  
 He saw the Devil on him gain,  
 Then lashed his steed with might and main.  
 Onward the pair flew through the gloom,  
 But nearer came the Doctor's doom,  
 For Satan's steed of coal-black hue  
 Close to the Longden charger drew.  
 The Devil chuckled, and his breath  
 Struck on the Doctor chill as death;  
 The latter now must surely fail,  
 For the Devil held his horse's tail.  
 With rapid turning of the wrist,  
 Satan began the tail to twist—  
 When lo—the steed, with fearful scream,  
 Plunged headlong in a mountain stream,  
 The Devil tugged—the tail gave way,  
 And then the Doctor yelled “Hurrah”;  
 For the torrent being safely passed,  
 The Devil's power o'er him was lost—  
 So said the laws of sorcery,

Which even Satan must obey.  
 The Devil gave an awful yell  
 Invoking all the powers of hell--  
 But Doctor as he safely rose,  
 Affixed his fingers to his nose.

Note.—In old days it was believed that if you could interpose a brook or running stream between you and witches, spectres or fiends, you were in perfect safety.

#### MISCELLANEOUS POEMS AND THEIR WRITERS.

In addition to the poets already mentioned, there are many other writers of verse who have contributed to the poetry and song-lore of East Cheshire, but whose works have not been so numerous as to justify a lengthy notice. Some mention of them should, however, be made, as in most cases their work is of a good standard.

#### BARDS OF HYDE.

The town of Hyde has produced several writers who come under this class; and a brief enumeration of these poets is as follows:

ROBERT WILSON, of Gee Cross, brother to W. E. Wilson, author of "The Thinning of the Thatch," and other humorous poems. He emigrated to the United States, where he was killed in an accident.

ANNIE DOLBEY, of Godley, a writer of some pretty pieces published in the "North Cheshire Herald" in 1876.

REV. THOMAS R. ELLIOTT, a Unitarian minister at Flowery Field, Hyde, the author of some pretty sonnets and short poems. He died at Mossley in 1904, at the age of 70 years.

SARAH JANE BAND, known as the "Longdendale Poetess," a native of Longdendale, but for years resident in Hyde. She tramped the district selling her poems in ballad-sheet form.

BOLTON D. TAYLOR, of Hyde and Dukinfield, at one time a prominent figure in local Wesleyan circles. During the last two decades of the 19th century, he wrote a number of poems, published in the "North Cheshire Herald," and a lengthy poem printed in booklet form on a Re-Union in connection with the Haughton Wesleyan Sunday School.

REV. MATTHEW WILSON, M.A., a clergyman of the Church of England, curate of St. Thomas' Church, and Curate-in-charge of St. Andrew's Church, Hyde, afterwards Curate-in-charge of St. Luke's Church, Dukinfield. He is now a vicar in Canada. Published a small book of poems with the title "Christian Regula," dated "Dukinfield, Nov. 9th, 1896."

JOHN HUNT, of Throstle Bank, who writes under the nom-de-plume of "Truthful James."

Other Hyde men who have written fugitive pieces for the local press are James Cooke; Joseph Henry Dunn; John Britner; Thomas A Rennison; D. Lewis; and several who chose to remain anonymous. William Charnock, of Newton Wood, also wrote verse during the closing decades of the 19th century.

#### POEMS FROM ROMILEY.

MARK JOHNSON, of Romiley, was a well-known poetical contributer to the "North Cheshire Herald" between 1870 and 1880. Was also author of several prose stories.

T. J. HOSKEN, of Romiley, was the author of a fine poem entitled "Ichabod."

JAMES WARD MOSELEY also wrote verse for the "Herald" in 1901.

#### LONGDENDALE POETS.

In addition to the Longdendale poets already mentioned, the following also wrote—George Stafford, of Broadbottom; Hannah Eastin, of Hollingworth; S. Beech, of Mottram; G. Hattrum, of Tintwistle; Edward O'Connor, of Mossley; Ephraim Moss, of Mossley.

## STALYBRIDGE SONG WRITERS.

This list must be increased by the addition of the names of Thomas Farrell, author of "That Stalybridge Girl"; and John Griffiths; George Cheetham; Ben Greenwood; and Wm. H. Richardson.

## DUKINFIELD BARDS

have been numerous, and possibly the Dukinfield poets of the past were men of much finer mettle than the local poets of to-day. Unfortunately the work of some of the by-gone bards has been lost. It is recorded that the Rev. Thos. Smith, minister of Dukinfield 1795 to 1797, who was himself a poet, promoted a Literary Society which numbered amongst its members three local poets named J. Kenworthy, J. Bardsley, and S. Cock. In spite of great effort I have not been able to find any lines by Kenworthy or Cock; and the only lines by Bardsley that I have come across are those preserved by the Rev. Alexander Gordon, in his history of Dukinfield Chapel. The Rev. T. Smith had written the line

"The strained eye, pacing o'er the dewy lawn."

Bardsley's comment upon the above was—

"See Tommy Smith enormously offend,  
And rise to faults which critics cannot mend."

Other Dukinfield writers of the close of the 19th century are—E. T. Drinkwater; A. E. Harrop; Clara B. Moorhouse; Sarah Ann Jeffries.

Almost each village and hamlet in the district has produced a bard, and the list includes Joseph Smith, of Marple; James Edward Cheetham, of Disley; and several residents of other neighbourhoods, who, however,

published the bulk of their verse in the East Cheshire press. The most notable of these were E. H. Swayne; E. Swann; James Bates, of Salford; "W.S.," of Bollington, the author of a lengthy poem on "White Nancy," and "N.S.," author of some pretty poems on the Seasons.

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#### CONCLUSION.

It is not without a feeling of sadness that an author pens the last lines of a book, and prepares to take leave of the subjects and the characters which have occupied his attention for months, and perhaps years. In the present instance this feeling is intensified because the research necessary for the compilation of the matter used in this book has led the writer to make many friendships of more than ordinarily pleasant character. I have either come in personal contact with all the bards mentioned in these articles, or with their descendants or close friends. Some have been wealthy, others in very humble circumstances; but all alike have been men and women whom it has done one good to know. Throughout all, one conclusion has been forced upon me, namely, that human life in East Cheshire has been rendered better and brighter by the songs and poems of the men and women whose lives and work occupy these pages. Even the humblest and the most illiterate of the local poets has met with some weary toil-worn mortal in his own sphere, to whom his halting lines have come as a ray of sunlight shining athwart the gloom. It may be, indeed, that the author knew nothing of this, that the poor poet went to his grave feeling that his life had been a failure—for the world at large has a way of

looking down upon those who do not regard the acquisition of money as the grandest thing in life. But no man whoever wrote, and put his heart and soul and the spirit of Christ into his work was ever a failure.

I look back with satisfaction to the many enduring friendships I have made during the years I have been collecting the material for this work. Some of the friendships have been interrupted by death, but the kind spirit of those who have gone before one to that land "beyond the veil," still lives in the poems they have left, and cheers and fills the heart with hope. I know of no more suitable ending to this history than the words of John Charles Twist—himself one of the sweetest of all the singers I have dealt with—who thus looked back with sadness and with hope upon the minstrel band he had known and loved.

Some lie all lonely in the grave,  
Where day and night the low winds moan;  
Hearts that we knew, all good and brave,  
Repose beneath some storied stone.

Deep hid below the daisied sod  
Most of our patient brothers sleep;  
Say, shall the chosen of our God  
The good they sowed not surely reap?

Ah, me! God's ways are wondrous strange;  
We stride adown life's shingly shore,  
Victims to every transient change  
For ever and for evermore.

The weak one, struggling hard with fate,  
Like swimmer borne away from shore,  
Soon sinks beneath time's crushing weight,  
His only dirge the tempest's roar.

Thus, thus, my friend, though we remain,  
We must go hence, or soon or late;  
How'er it be, I count it gain  
To those who quit this trammelled state.

Then let us look to that dear time  
When round us our lost comrades throng,  
Shouting this welcome through God's clime,  
"Come, brother bards, these bards among."

## APPENDIX.

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### MR. THOMAS MIDDLETON.

(Author of "Annals of Hyde," etc.)

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(By RANDAL SIDEBOOTHAM.)

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The town of Hyde without Mr. Thomas Middleton—or, as he is more popularly known, Mr. Tom Middleton—would be bereft of one of its most notable and interesting personalities. Its history, without the writings of Mr. Middleton, would be like "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark; like a cloudless noon-day sky without the sun. As a local historian, Mr. Middleton stands on a pedestal to himself, and, having read a great deal of what he has written, I have often thought how poor Hyde and the surrounding districts would be, so far as accessible historical records are concerned, if it had not been for

### MR. MIDDLETON'S EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATIONS AND PRODUCTIONS.

It is one thing for a town to have a history; it is quite another thing for that history to be compiled in a compact and accessible form. Thanks to Mr. Middleton's able, indefatigable, and persistent labours, we have now in a readable and comprehensive volume as much of this history as anybody would care to read. Possessing a

## II.

versatile mind, a restless brain, an almost insatiable thirst for historical knowledge, a profound love for reading, and a wonderfully retentive memory, Mr. Middleton, in the capacity of local historian, has done greater service to Hyde than any other man, living or dead. But Mr. Middleton is not merely our leading local historian.

### HE IS ALSO AN ANTIQUARY.

a student of folklore, a lover of nature, an able speaker, a Sunday school leader, a sportsman, a religious worker, a business man, and, what is more, a good-natured, honest, upright, courteous, and obliging gentleman. You cannot spend five minutes in Mr. Middleton's magnetic and fascinating company without his telling you something you didn't know.

It is very probable that many of those who know Mr. Middleton only by repute, who during the last ten years have read his books, his lectures, and his numerous contributions to the columns of the "North Cheshire Herald," will have pictured him as being a man at least of middle age, if not much beyond. They will be surprised to learn that Mr. Middleton is

### ONLY IN HIS 34th YEAR.

In his case the "young idea" was taught how to "shoot" very early indeed—nay, it seems almost to have taught itself, for it is one of Mr. Middleton's most remarkable personal characteristics that, even while a youth at school, he conceived the art and cultivated the practice of imparting information and knowledge to others. His "Annals of Hyde and district," a standard work of local history, containing 350 pages, is far and away the most valuable production of its kind, and Mr. Middleton was barely twenty years of age when he entered upon the great task of

### III.

completing it—a task which occupied nearly a whole decade. In this extremely interesting work the author covers the vast period from Julius Cæsar's invasion of Britain (over fifty years before the Christian era) to the end of the last century. Of course, it is only within the last century that the town of Hyde has existed in anything like the condition we know it to-day, and up to the birth of the "North Cheshire Herald," in 1851, there was at Hyde

#### NO PUBLIC RECORDER OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

except one or two outside publications which gave very imperfect reports of what took place. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that Mr. Middleton, in the production named, should have obtained numerous records of local historical events covering some centuries. To obtain this information much labour, of which the public know nothing, is required; and when it is mentioned that our historian has had to search the registers of the old churches in the district—books dating back hundreds of years, and containing writing scarcely legible—has had to examine thousands of old newspapers, to pore over old deeds and legal documents, to go carefully through scores of old township books and records, to find out and interview hundreds of persons likely to be possessed of information, and to correspond with people all over the world, it will readily be understood that Mr. Middleton's task has necessitated hard work and great perseverance.

#### MR. MIDDLETON IS A NATIVE OF HYDE,

having been born at Kingston, on the 23rd December, 1872. He is the only son of the late Mr. Henry Middleton, and the family has been connected with Hyde for over a century.

#### IV.

It came to Hyde from Derbyshire, about the year 1790. Previous to that the ancestors of the family had settled at Hope and Tideswell, as early as the reign of Henry VII. The church registers at Hope and Tideswell prove

#### AN UNBROKEN CONNECTION OF THE NAME OF MIDDLETON

with that portion of the Peak for a period of over 300 years. The Middletons appear to have occupied a position of some standing. Several of them were engaged in trade at an early period, and after the custom of the time, they issued their own coins or token. In the "Reliquary" for January, 1867, in an article on "Traders' Tokens of Derbyshire," there is an illustration of one of the ancient Tideswell tokens; the coin bears on the obverse the words—"Richard Middleton, His Halfe-Peny," and on the reverse—"In Tyds-wal 1669." In 1658 a Thomas Middleton was churchwarden at Tideswell, and in 1693 a second Thomas Middleton held the same office. On coming to Hyde,

#### THE MIDDLETON FAMILY SETTLED AT GLASS HOUSE FOLD,

Haughton, where they inter-married with the Ashtons, of the Hyde Corn Mill. The family has been connected with St. George's Church since its erection, in 1832. The present Mr. Middleton's great grandfather, one Martin Middleton, was one of the first superintendents at St. George's Sunday School. Quite recently the first minute book of this school was discovered, and the first name on it was found to be that of Thomas Middleton, grandfather of our present subject, who also was a superintendent at St. George's, and first secretary, and one of the founders of the earliest Conservative Association in Hyde, about the

#### IV.

year 1827. For half a century the late Mr. Henry Middleton was an active worker at St. George's Church and Schools, and a few years before his death, which took place in 1896, he was presented with a bronze medal in commemoration of the fact.

Our subject, Mr. Tom Middleton, received his early education at St. George's Day School, under Mr. S. N. Brooks, J.P., and later on was for several years

#### A STUDENT AT TIDESWELL GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Whilst at Tideswell he played with the cricket and football teams, and among his chums, who also played for the same school, were Walter Brearley, the Lancashire and All England amateur fast bowler; the brothers J. and A. Messenger, since well-known as members of the Stalybridge club; and F. Cartwright, of Hyde. On leaving school he joined his father in the business of a general draper, at Manchester-road, Hyde, which was founded by his grandfather in 1855, and has now been carried on for 51 years.

At a very early age Mr. Tom Middleton began to take an active part in public affairs, and when but a youth became a teacher in St. George's Sunday School, where he is at the present time

#### LEADER OF THE YOUNG MEN'S CLASS,

the largest of its kind in the town, with a membership of about a hundred, and an average weekly attendance of about seventy. He is also a superintendent of the Sunday School, being the fourth member of his family who has held the office in successive generations. With the St. George's Dramatic Society,

## VI.

founded about 1869, he has long been prominently associated, having filled principal roles in many of the pieces performed by that body. In the proceedings of the St. George's Mutual Improvement Society—a well-known literary and debating society, which ceased to exist several years ago—he took a leading part, and it was here that he acquired considerable facility as a speaker and debater. For ten years he was a sidesman at St. George's, an office to which he was first elected when barely nineteen years of age. He is still a member of the Church Council, and his co-operation, it scarcely need be said, in whatever direction it may be exercised, is of solid value. What may be termed Mr. Middleton's religious work has not been confined to one denomination. At different times his services have been sought after by various churches and chapels in the town and district, and he has delivered numerous valuable addresses on suitable topics to Sunday school classes. For some time he did voluntary mission work at St. Matthew's, Dukinfield, and St. Andrew's Mission Room, Hyde. For five years he was hon. secretary to the local branch of the Church Missionary Society, and for ten years he has been hon. secretary to Hyde branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society. When the lifeboat movement was started at Hyde, in 1895, he acted as one of the hon. secretaries of the local lifeboat fund, along with Mr. George Stevens, late Town Clerk of Hyde.

Holding strong views on the question of

### CHRISTIAN UNITY,

Mr. Middleton has persistently striven to destroy the bitterness which too often mars the relations between the Established Church

## VII.

and Nonconformity. His views on this question have been frequently expressed in public speeches. "What a farce it is," he remarked on one occasion, "for societies of men and women banded together to preach the Gospel of Christ—which is, above all else, a Gospel of brotherly love and charity—to stand aloof from each other in isolated companies, for ever dwelling upon the differences and jealousies which divide them, while the world is full of needless suffering, and oppression and wrong are rife. Why not think more and more of the points upon which all agree, of the great cause, and the Christ we all revere in common, and, forgetting the rest, which after all is very insignificant, join hand in hand, and so make easier the task of brightening the world, and spreading the Kingdom of Christ among men." Acting upon this fine and broad principle Mr. Middleton has been a frequent speaker on Nonconformist platforms and at Pleasant Sunday Afternoon gatherings. He has been a zealous worker on behalf of the Hyde Y.M.C.A., of which he was president in 1900 and 1901. First and foremost, of course, he has been a Churchman, deep and sincere in his convictions. Inspired by a desire to see the Church of England increase her strength and usefulness, he took an active part in the crusade for Church Reform, carried on by the Protestant party at Hyde a few years ago.

For many years Mr. Middleton has been an enthusiastic antiquary. If you show him a novelty that may possibly have a hidden past of more than ordinary interest, he wants to know something about its age, its history, in whose reign it flourished, and so on. He has taken an active part in the excavation of the Roman military station of Melandra Castle,

## VIII.

Gamesley. In most of the big cities of Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire, and at Chetham College, Manchester, before the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, he has

### LECTURED ON ANTIQUARIAN SUBJECTS,

local history, and folk lore. While pursuing these subjects he has come in contact with many of the most noted antiquaries and literary men of the north, and he speaks in terms of the warmest praise and admiration of such antiquaries as Mr. George Yates, F.S.A., of Manchester; Mr. Sutton, Chief Librarian for the City of Manchester; Professor Boyd Dawkins, Manchester; Colonel Fishwick, J.P., author of "The History of Amounderness," and many other historical works; Mr. Henry Taylor, F.S.A., of Curzon Park, Chester Returning Officer for the Hyde Division, Deputy Constable of Flint Castle, author of "The History of Flint" and other historical works; and many others.

Much space might be occupied in dealing with

### MR. MIDDLETON'S CONNECTION WITH POLITICS,

but in a sketch of this character it is quite unnecessary. He began at a very early age to display an interest in political questions, which he continues to study very closely. He has spoken on the same platform with Lord Balcarres, the late Mr. Edward Chapman, ex-M.P., for the Hyde Division; Mr. J. W. Sidebotham, a former M.P. for the same constituency; the Hon. Alan de Tatton Egerton, who for many years represented the Knutsford Division in Parliament; the Right Hon. Geo. Wyndham, M.P. for Dover, and ex-Chief Secretary for Ireland; and other well-known politicians. At the time of the late Boer War,

## IX.

Mr Middleton was on the Committee of the Soldiers' Home at Fairfield, in connection with the Manchester Regiment, and addressed several meetings on behalf of the Regiment in the Ashton-under-Lyne Town Hall.

It is, perhaps, as a writer that Mr. Middleton is best known by the public of Hyde and other districts. He seems to have begun almost everything at an early age. When but a boy, he became

### A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE COLUMNS OF THE "NORTH CHESHIRE HERALD,"

writing several short stories for the paper; and not long afterwards there appeared in the "Herald" a serial story from his clever and fertile pen. One of the best of his early contributions was a record—published in the "Herald" of an interview with the late Mr. W. J. Austin, J.P., of Broadbottom Hall, with whom he was on very friendly terms. It was a beautiful description of the Hall, and its surroundings and historical associations, and, reading it at the time of its appearance, I remember being struck, not alone with its excellence, but with its intensely interesting character, for I happen myself to have had some acquaintance with Broadbottom Hall for many years. As a result of this literary achievement, Mr. Middleton was entertained by Mr. Austin at the Queen's Hotel, Manchester, where he had the honour of meeting the late Sir John Wm. Maclure, Bart., M.P., and the late Mr. Herbert Rhodes, J.P., of Hollingworth.

It was in 1898 that

### MR. MIDDLETON'S FIRST BOOK

appeared. This was "A Political History of East Cheshire." In the following year his

## X.

“Annals of Hyde and District” was published, this being the first serious attempt to place the history of Hyde and the surrounding localities upon record in a permanent form. Mr. Middleton possessed special facilities for the role of local historian. He was the friend, and on several occasions the guest, of the late John Clarke, son of Captain Hyde John Clarke, of the Royal Navy, formerly of Hyde Hall, Hyde. Mr. Clarke frequently paid visits to him at Hyde, and in his company Mr. Middleton went over the old historical places of Hyde. In this way he obtained possession of much valuable information, concerning the history of the families of Hyde and Hyde-Clarke. Mr. Clarke had in his possession many of the original portraits of the Hyde family, which formerly hung in Hyde Hall, and he also was the possessor of the sword which formerly belonged to one of his ancestors, George Clarke, who was governor of New York when the United States were a British Colony. He had also many other relics of great interest, including the Bible upon which witnesses were sworn who gave evidence in the trial of the prisoners charged with the murder of Thomas Ashton, of Pole Bank, Gee Cross, in 1831.

### MR. MIDDLETON'S GRANDMOTHER

was a daughter of John Ashton, the miller, of Hyde Corn Mill, which was worked by the Ashton family for many generations. The mill stood on the banks of the Tame, opposite Hyde Hall, and was quite a historic institution,—a mill having existed on that spot since the days of King John (13th century). Evidence of the erection of a mill at Hyde upon the banks of the River Tame, as early as the fifteenth century, may be found in the Hyde deeds.

## THE CORN MILL AT HYDE

was a busy place in the olden time, and as late as the middle of the 19th century the inhabitants of all the surrounding townships carried their corn to be ground at this old mill. Among the interesting bits of history connected with it, there is a record of the great flood of 1799—still commemorated by the well-known floodmark on Gibraltar Mill,—which tells how Mr. Middleton's great grandfather, John Ashton, was with his men busily engaged for some days in endeavouring to prevent the heavy trees washed down the river by the flood, causing serious damage to the mill-wheels and walls of the old Corn Mill at Hyde. The mill was pulled down about the close of the eighties of the last century, having been worked up to then. Mr. John Thornely, formerly of Flowery Field House, Hyde, one of the first Aldermen of the Hyde Corporation, and now a resident of Wilmslow, purchased the oak beams of the old Hyde corn mill, and had them converted into a beautiful suite of furniture.

It is also a noteworthy fact that Mr. Middleton's maternal grandfather, Charles Swindells, a descendant of a yeoman family long settled in Werneth, was living at Swindells Farm, in Apethorne-lane, at the time of the murder of Thomas Ashton, on January 3rd, 1831. The murder took place close to the farm-house, and Mr. Charles Swindells saw the body within a few minutes of its being discovered.

When collecting the vast amount of historical matter which his

“ANNALS OF HYDE”

certainly, Mr. Middleton received encouragement from Mr. J. W. Sidebotham, Mr. T. Gair

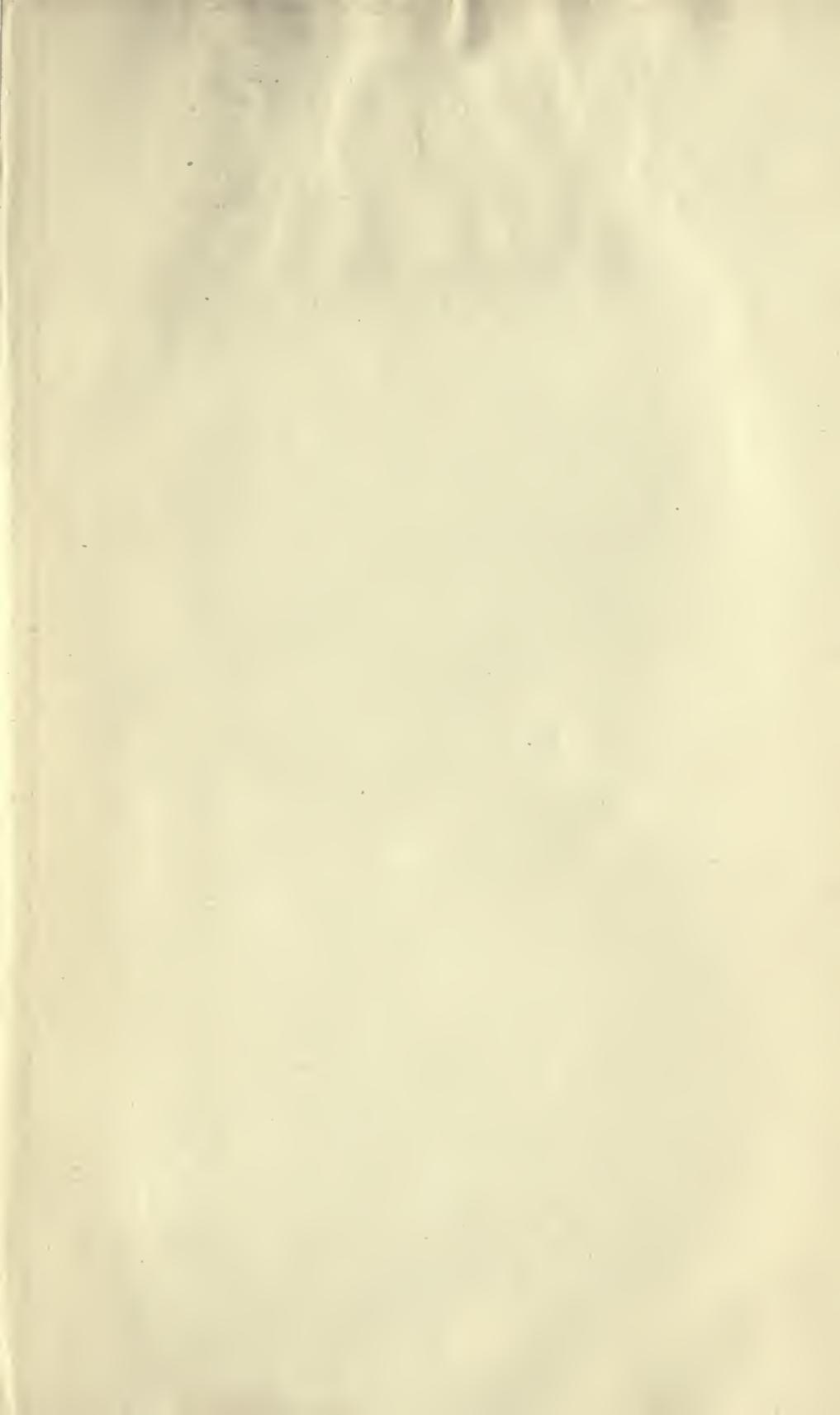
## XII.

Ashton, M.P., the late Mr. Edward Chapman, J.P., Mr. John Thornely, Rev. W. G. Bridges, M.A., Mr. Joshua Oldham, Mr. R. Hamnett, Mr. John Chorton, the proprietors of the "North Cheshire Herald," Mr. John Clarke (the last surviving member of Captain Clarke's family), Mr. James Deakin, and many other gentlemen who have studied local history, or who have possessed documents or relics of historic interest. The book met with a very good reception, and in addition to the gentlemen named the subscribers included Lord Howard of Glossop, Sir William Hyde Parker, the Right Hon. James Bryce, M.P. (Chief Secretary of State for Ireland in the present Government, and son-in-law to the late Mr. Alderman Thomas Ashton), Mr. Thomas Gair Ashton, M.P., Colonel Sidebottom, and the libraries, and practically all the leading residents of the borough and district.

In 1900 Mr. Middleton wrote for the "North Cheshire Herald"

### ANOTHER HISTORICAL WORK, "OLD GODLEY,"

dealing specially with the history of the township of Godley and its worthies. Subsequently it was published in book form, and it constitutes a most interesting permanent record. At later periods Mr. Middleton has written a "History of Denton and Haughton," "Legends of Longdendale" (a book dealing with the traditions and folk-lore of the Longdendale Valley), "The History of St. George's Church, Hyde," and "Literary Worthies of North-East Cheshire"—all works, as their names imply, dealing with the history, biography, and folk-lore of this neighbourhood.



# Poets, Poems, and Rhymes OF East Cheshire,

- BY -

## THOMAS MIDDLETON,

Author of "Annals of Hyde," "The

Practical Chemistry Sweeper,  
BERT FEARSON,

Solicitors for the said Brecon  
1, Beeley Street, Hyde, S.  
P. K. N. O. W. L. S. AND S.  
Dated this 29th day of April, 1907.  
has notice.  
particulars so distributed to any person of  
not be liable for the assets of the deceased, &  
these shall then have had notice; and then  
guard only to the claims and demands of  
amounts the person entitled thereto  
to distribute the assets of the said de-  
1907, after which date the executors will  
said executors, on or before the day of  
and demands to the undesignated, solicitors  
sent in writing particulars of their debts,  
executors therein named), are hereby re-  
Glasgow, or Stockport Road, Alfreton, Gashill  
Port-road, Hyde, Alfreton, Grocer; and  
day of January, 1907, by Charles Lyon, of  
District Probate Registry at Chester, on the  
December, 1906, and whose will was proved in  
Blacksmith, deceased (who died on the 3rd of  
Board, Hyde, in the County of Chester, I  
any debts, claims, or demands against the  
of Joseph Cooper, late of Fearn Bank, Sto-  
December, 1906, and whose will was proved in  
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Board, Hyde, in the County of Chester, I  
any debts, claims, or demands against the  
of Joseph Cooper, late of Fearn Bank, Sto-

**B**E JOSEPH COOPER, Deceased.—Pursu-  
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1s  
1s

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